FOR ALL GENRES, ALL GAMES & ALL ROLEPLAYERS

21 New roleplaying & CCG releases reviewed in this issue!

Arcane

the roleplaying mag

STOP!

DON'T LET YOUR PLAYERS GET AWAY WITH MURDER

- see page 22

REVIEWED!

Masks of Nyarlathotep

Is the Call of Cthulhu classic the best campaign ever written?

Oyez! Oyez!

Communication problems in medieval games

REVIEWED!

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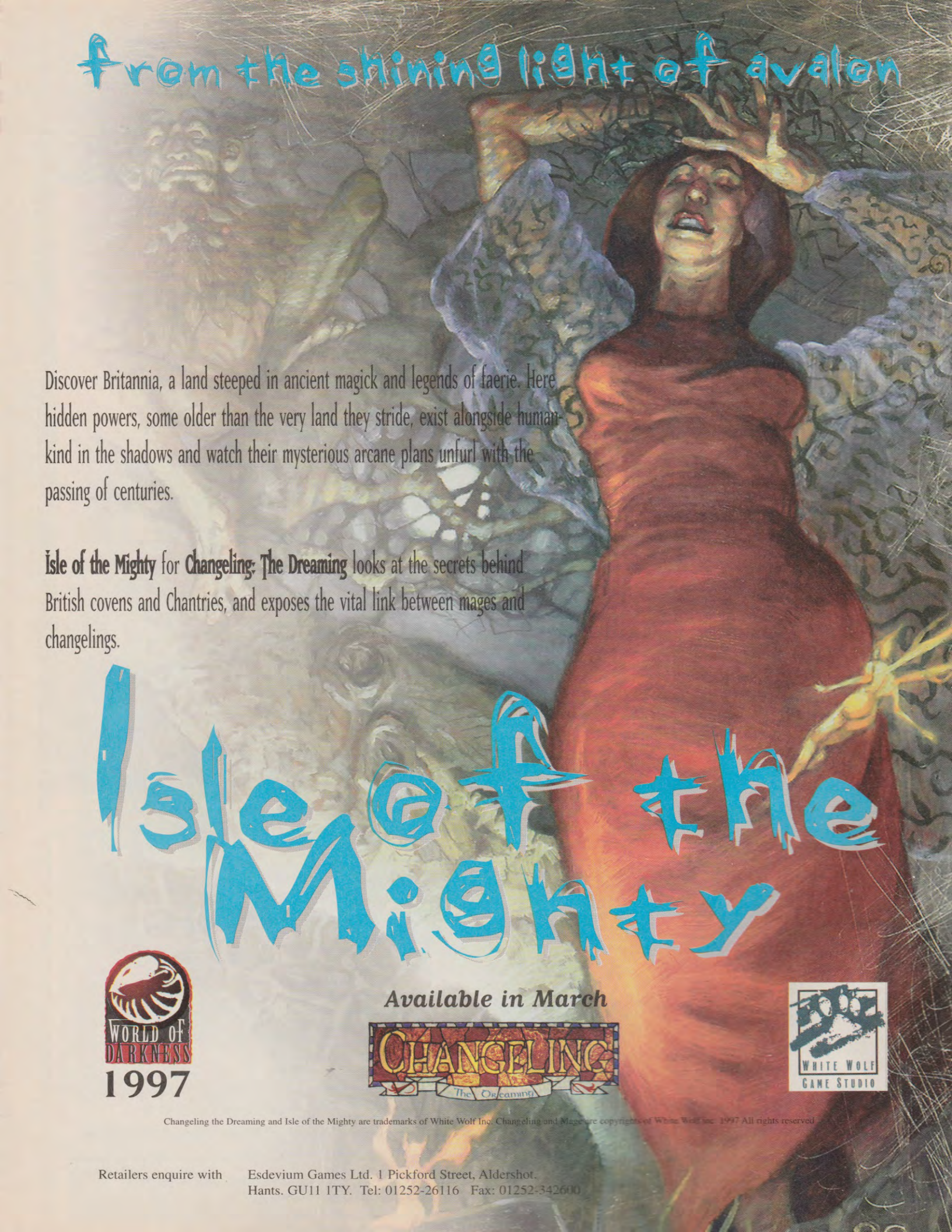
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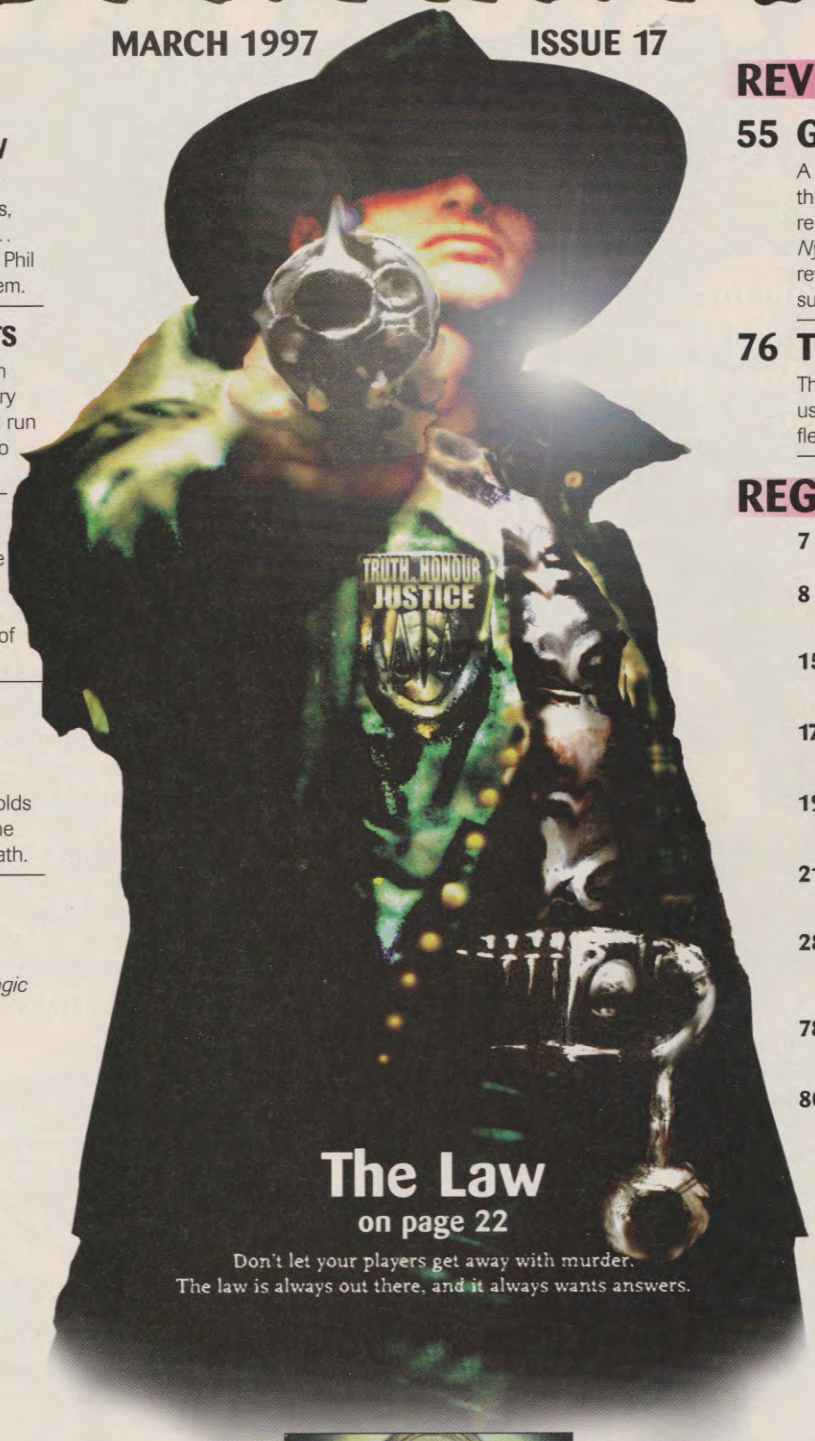

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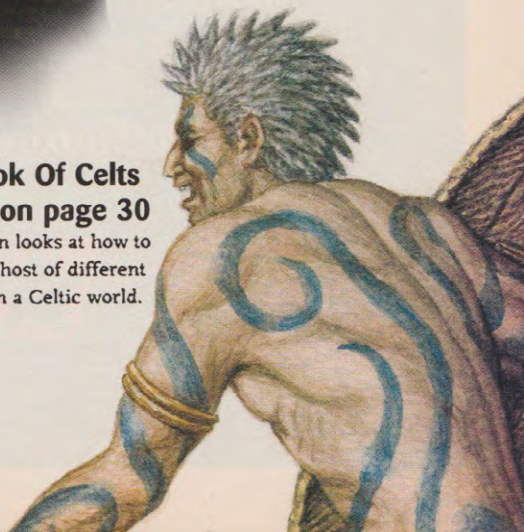

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arcane
30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW
Tel +44 (1225) 442244
Fax +44 (1225) 732252
e-mail arcane@futurenet.co.uk
web site http://www.futurenet.co.uk/

Dan Joyce Editor
djoyce@futurenet.co.uk
Andy Butcher Deputy Editor
abutcher@futurenet.co.uk
Maryanne Booth Art Editor
mbooth@futurenet.co.uk

Writers and Editorial
Dan Abnett, Chris Baylis, Jon Billington, Alex Bund, Craig Cartmell, Steve Faragher, Matthew Green, Clare Johnson, Andy Lanning, Phil Masters, John Milner, Jonathan Palmer, Paul Pettengale, Andrew Rilstone, Jim Swallow, Lucya Szachnowski, Adam Tinworth and Jo Walton

Photography **Rick Buettner**
Cover & feature Illustration **Malcolm Davies and Clint Langley**
Additional Illustration **Lee Carter, Andrew Currie, Simon Gurr, Keith Jackson and Alexis Liosatos**

If you're having trouble getting hold of **arcane** *contact...*
Pete Walker Circulation Manager
If you would like to subscribe telephone 01225 822511, *fax* 01458 274378, *or write to*
arcane subscriptions
Future Publishing, Freepost BS4900
Somerton TA11 7BR

Advertising
Adrian Hill Ad Manager
ahill@futurenet.co.uk
Richard Bogie
Business Development Manager
Simon Moss
Group Advertising Manager

Business
Jim Douglas Publisher
jdouglas@futurenet.co.uk
Liz Ramsay Publicity Manager
Tel 0171 331 3920

Overseas Licensing
Mark Williams
Tel 0171 331 3920 Fax 0171 331 3929

Management
Managing Director **Greg Ingham**
Chairman **Nick Alexander**

Production
Group Production Manager **Judith Green**
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Senior Production Co-ordinator **Rose Rudd**
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The subscription rate for 12 issues is:
UK £33 **Europe** £45 **US** £57.75
Rest of World £61.75

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arcane is printed in the UK by
TPL Printers (UK) Ltd
ABC Member of the
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This issue would have been impossible without... **caffeine**
This issue would have been a lot easier without... **deadlines**

How do you plead?

Where was The Law when that NPC died?

Okay, I'm guilty too. Years ago I once ran a campaign like Michael Crichton's *Westworld*. Yul Brinner didn't feature, didn't stomp about, glaring with his steely infra-red eyes, and didn't shoot the players with his Colt 45. But there was a disturbing similarity: the clean-up crew.

After the NPCs had been gunned down, or stabbed with swords or whatever, nothing much happened until the players went off-scene. Then, without anyone knowing – not even me – the maintenance men came round in a truck and picked up all the dead bodies. Next morning – not a trace. Each game day dawned bright and new.

The players didn't have to trouble their consciences with guilt. And they knew that even if they were arrested they'd break out somehow. Surely I wasn't going to force them to roleplay sitting in a prison for 40 years?

Maybe I should've. Or rather, I should have let them think that it might happen; that they might have to generate another character because the psycho they were playing was going to spend the next 40 years of his game life trying to dig through a solid stone wall with a spoon.

You see, if the law doesn't exist it's hard to suspend your disbelief in a gameworld. Nothing really matters. So anything goes.

This approach doesn't work. Every action – at least, every significant action – has to have a reaction. It's just as true in a sociological sense ('if you kill someone, the law will come after you') as it is in a physical sense ('if you fall of a cliff, you will break bones'). That's why 'realism' is dependent not just on the rules, but on the referee running the game. It doesn't matter if there are 40 pages on ballistics in a rules system if the players in the game never have to think afterwards about the holes their bullets make.

You know this already. Once you've played a modern-day game, you cannot ignore the law. It comes knocking on doors, demanding entrance. 'Where were you on the night of the murder, Professor Bradley? Defending the Earth against Great Cthulhu? Ah. Would you mind coming with me to the station, sir?'

In the 20th century, the law is out there – bloodhounds baying, sirens wailing, chopper searchlights strafing the ground. It wants answers. So the players have to answer for everything they do – and maybe things they didn't do.

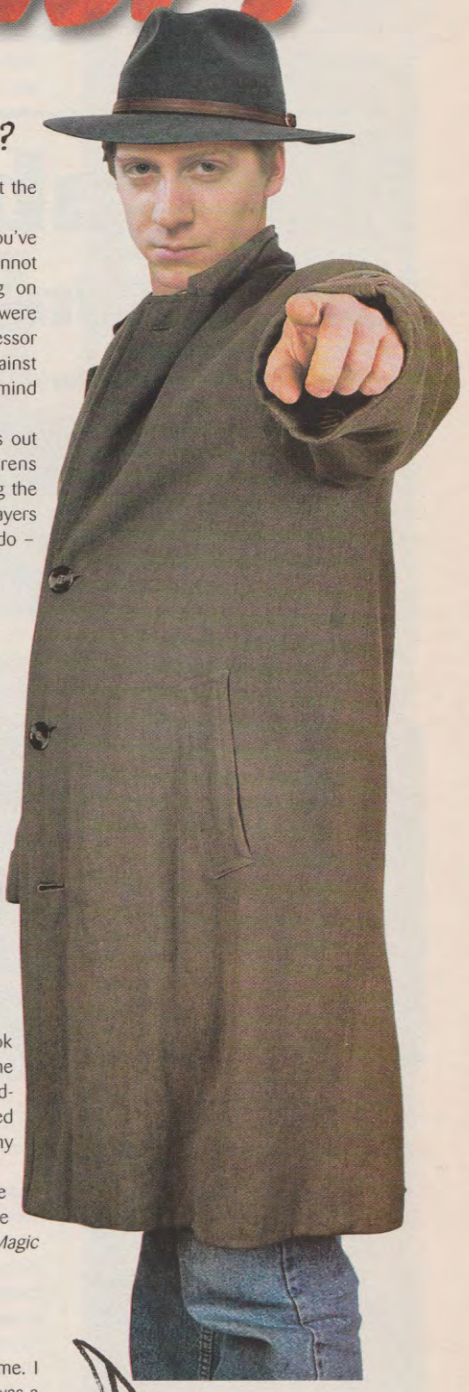
"You cannot ignore the law. It comes knocking on doors, demanding entrance. 'Where were you on the night of the murder, Professor Bradley?'"

So an active legal system is realistic, but it also offers a lot of great roleplaying opportunities. Take a look at Phil Masters' feature starting on page 22 to find your proof.

You'll have seen the free *Magic* book on the front of this issue. There's some great stuff in there, even for second-rate players like me, who get kicked out of local tournaments by spawny gits called Dave Wells.

So that you can implement the strategies in it to the full, we've included an article on setting up *Magic* tournaments and leagues (page 48).

Finally, the bloke on the right isn't me. I haven't worn a coat like that since I was a student (shopping at Oxfam, trying to pay for rounds of drinks with a cheque, etc). Maryanne stuck my head on top of a stunt double using bendy-photo-transplantation technology. Spooky.



Dan Joyce, Editor

Famous for 15 Minutes

On the 4th of February, a working day for most of us, Lea Davidson of Winchester and 'a female acquaintance' were lazing in bed enjoying a relaxing breakfast and aimlessly flicking through the cable channels on their posh television, when Lea's lotus-eating reverie was startled by a fleeting glimpse of Richard Garfield.

"Stop! Go back! It's *Magic!*" he commanded his belle, masterfully. Then, in an almost inaudible machiavellian aside: "My chance to get an **arcane** T-shirt has finally arrived! At last!"

His 'acquaintance' dutifully switched back through the channels to find *New Buzz Byte* on the Sci-Fi station, whereupon a maniacal smirk gradually spread across Lea's already twisted face as he watched a five-minute show dedicated solely to the rather popular Wizards of the Coast collectable card game.

Lea wrung his sweat-drenched hands and a thin flow of saliva etched its way down his chin from the corner of his mouth, allegedly. He then ran, shamelessly naked, to his computer to send us a barely intelligible e-mail, telling how the programme he'd just watched had covered *Magic* favourably and had got the point of the whole thing across well – and asking, grovelling even, for an **arcane** T-shirt, of the large variety, please. Oh go on, please...

Lea, mate, we did specifically say 'Famous for *15* Minutes' and that programme *was* only five minutes long. Nevertheless, as you are from Winchester, we're sending you a T-shirt, anyway. But next time Steve Faragher and Jon Palmer come back home, you owe them both a pint in The Black Boy. Got that?

Meanwhile, anyone else who wants to contribute should write to:

15 Minutes, arcane, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW Or e-mail us at: arcane@futurenet.co.uk for further T-shirt/beer transactions and the like.

Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah

White Wolf to release controversial new sourcebook for *Wraith: The Oblivion.*

COMING SOON

Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah is a setting book for *Wraith: The Oblivion,* dealing with the Holocaust, the systematic extermination of Jews by Nazi Germany during World War II and its aftermath. It is being published under the company's mature readers imprint, Black Dog.

News of the supplement has already stirred up controversy on the Internet, where people have suggested that roleplaying is not a suitable medium for addressing the Holocaust. It has also been suggested that the very idea is simply offensive.

The sourcebook has two main thrusts – the history of the Holocaust itself, purely as background, and its modern-day effects on *Wraith's* Shadowlands. Through the history section, real world and *World of Darkness* events will be clearly differentiated.

Wraith line developer, Richard Dansky, who originated the project, was visited by the Anti Defamation League (ADL) while he was working on the book. The ADL chose not to condemn the book.

Dansky, who is Jewish, has stated that the book is the reason that he accepted the *Wraith* job two years ago. "I am fully aware of the potential repercussions of this book," he said. "I know that no matter what I do, I will anger people. It may hurt people, who say that the Holocaust is not fitting material for a game.

"Believe me, I wrestled with that issue. I decided to do the book anyway. Why? Because we must keep telling the story."

The book has also been criticised for bringing the Holocaust into the domain of the supernatural creatures that are the backbone of White Wolf's products.

"From where I'm sitting, it would have been very easy for

Havok

A brand new army of small plastic men advances angrily.

'In a brutal universe a savage new Empire is about to explode!' Or, leastways, in a tough marketing arena, a new line of miniature figures is waving its spears at the Games Workshop empire.

Bluebird Toys recently launched a line of plastic figures incorporating 'the most aspirational elements of the best in sci-fi'. Be that as it may, the figures are very reminiscent of Workshop's *Warhammer 40K* figures.

Though aimed at 8-12 year-old boys, the Havok figures would make reasonable props for any wargamer or roleplayer.

The figures come in packs of three, and retail for £2.99 each. Not cheap. They are fully painted, though the quality will only satisfy those who never do their own enamelling. They come will a selection of transfers, too.

The first wave of figures consists of eight 'warrior packs', representing the Havok universe's three major forces – the Karn, Nexus and Ptervores. Each pack comes with a two-page 'data probe', giving a 'battle report' and 'combat data'.

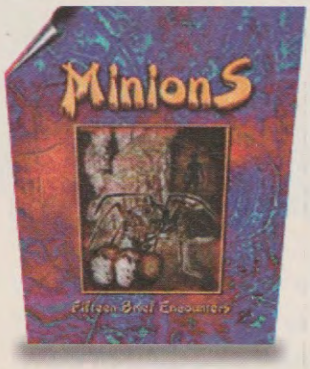
Bluebird's marketing is supported by a four-page comic strip in *2000AD.* It obviously means business. But whether roleplayers will be among its customers remains to be seen.

assorted supernatural beings to get heavily involved in *The Shoah*. For some reason, they didn't," said Dansky.

"From where I'm sitting, it would have been very easy for the Allied powers to do more to liberate the camps or expedite immigration of populations targeted for extermination. For some reason, they didn't."

The supplement is written by Rob Hatch and a professional writer who had chosen to use a pen name because of "professional concerns about having his name on a game book". Dansky himself and Janet Berliner, author of books including *Child of the Light* and *Child of the Journey*, also contribute.

Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah will be published on April 15th – Holocaust Remembrance Day. There'll be a full review of the book in the nest issue of **arcane**.



Minions

Call of Cthulhu scenarios.

Plug-in encounters for any campaign are a great way to cool the fevered brain of the overworked ref. **arcane** has pioneered this kind of open-ended scenario, and now, perhaps in homage (ahem) Chaosium has released 15 of its own for *Call of Cthulhu*.

All 15 adventures are designed to be used as brief interludes between bigger adventures, or as red herrings in longer campaigns. They're set in 1920s England – good news for British keepers, who won't have to transplant, say, a murder at a Mississippi jazz festival on to a church-spired village green where men with big moustaches politely applaud the smack of leather on willow. Keepers running games in the 1890s or 1990s should have little trouble adapting the encounters to suit.

Though the first ten of the encounters are independent, the last five are interlinked. They form the saga of the Horror Man, a tale of Mythos experimentations upon humanity, and the hideous results that arise from it. More malicious interfering from the Fungi from Yuggoth, your correspondent suspects.

Minions will be a 64-page softback book and we'll have a full review soon.

seymour

Don't go down to the woods today. No, don't. Ever. Full of pitfalls and pixies, apparently. Not teddy bears at all.

As ah was say-eng... 'bout ay-elves. Afore ah wuz so rudely interrelated. Too many folks do not HEED the messy-jiz that ah have sprayed around The Wirral thru this organ – but ah hav seed the darned critters here in mah owen backyard – clearly divisible to the naked arse. Trousers upon trousers of 'em. Pesky li'l pixies with thay-are pointy ears, malicious humor and contorted chickanery...

In truth, if ah'd had me a may-en for effery ay-elf and piskie ah'd seed scootin' round the bottom of the garden a-worryin' thar chickens and thar wimminfolk, ah'd git off into the woods mah say-elf and wressel thaym to thar grau-end with mah owen bare hay-ends, if ah had two. Ah'll shew 'em fer comin' n messin' on mah proper tea. Wears mah gurn?

And so Seymour ran off into the woods after the pixies and was never seen nor heard of again.

Except those children brave, or dim-witted, enough to follow after him. For these, what began as an afternoon's youthful fun would quickly become an unimaginably horrid nightmare after dark... But that's another story.

STAR WARS

Past, present and future... An in-depth look at the original three films, the '90s Special Editions and the next trilogy.

PLUS!

THE BORROWERS BILL AND TED DIRECTOR PETER HEWITT REVEALS HOW HE PUT LITTLE PEOPLE ON THE BIG SCREEN IN OUR EXCLUSIVE SET REPORT

DARK SKIES SERIES STARS ERIC CLOSE AND MEGAN WARD TALK ALIENS AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES.

RED DWARF IT'S ALL CHANGE FOR SEASON SEVEN, BUT CRAIG (LISTER) CHARLES, ROBERT (KRYTEN) LLEWELLYN, DANNY (CAT) JOHN-JULES AND CHLOE (KOCHANSKI) ANNETT RECKON THE NEW DIRECTION SUITS THEM FINE.

SFX

Future Publishing

On sale now!

Win £5 in 'crewsade'

If you see Mr Clancy in an area of woodland near you, approach him and say:
"You are Seymour J Clancy III and I join you in your 'crewsade' demanding only ale as wages. Give me £5. I'm thirsty".

The rules – which are there to be broken

1. Have as many goes as you like.
2. Approach anyone who looks vaguely like our correspondent, as many times as you want.
3. But keep a watchful eye on they cows in yonder field. When they come home, the game's over.
4. Costumes and latex weapons are not required. However, if these would make you feel more comfortable, it's your decision and we'll respect it.
5. Don't send your claims to us; this is only a joke.
6. arcane cannot accept any responsibility for anyone who gets thumped or thrown out of the pub.

V returns

The classic tale of alien invasion is back on video

Warner Home Video is set to re-release the complete run of the classic science fiction show *V* on video this spring.

One of the most popular science fiction shows of all time, the original *V* mini-series became an instant smash hit when it was first shown in 1983. In fact, it proved so popular that a second series, *V: The Final Battle,* was made.

The new video releases have been digitally re-mastered to improve the sound and picture quality and will be available on four tapes.

The first features the original *V* series in its entirety, in which human-looking aliens arrive on Earth in enormous motherships, claiming to mean humanity no harm. Although the governments of the world accept the Visitors' claims, a few people remain suspicious of the aliens' intentions. When the Visitors' true plans are uncovered, these people form the backbone of a resistance movement dedicated to saving the world.

The next three tapes present the second series, *V: The Final Battle,* in three parts. The story continues the tale of the Visitors' deceit and of the small resistance groups that are struggling to bring the truth to light.

All four tapes will be released together at the end of March and come with a recommended retail price of £9.99 each.

Starblade Battalion Mekton

Tying together *Cyberpunk 2020* and *Mekton Zeta*...

The next R Talsorian sourcebook for its *Mekton Zeta* system, *Starblade Battalion Mekton* presents a campaign based on the future of *Cyberpunk 2020.*

Having survived an ecological holocaust, man has risen again to conquer the stars. But humanity is torn by the rivalry between two factions which could still see the extinction of the species.

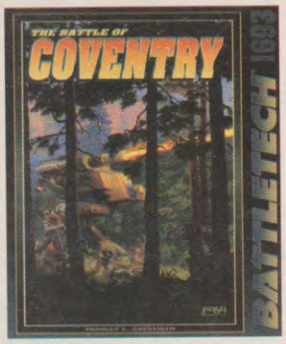
The Expansionists, led by the Solingen Corporation, seek to exploit the resources opened up by star travel. In their way stand the fanatically ecological Gaian Circle. The Gaians dominate the United Stellar States Alliance, enforcing crushingly rigid conservation laws. With no compromise, the first interstellar war has begun.

Only the Starblade Battalion, a group of renegade mechajocks, scouts and outsiders, can save the human race now. Drawing on cyberpunk ideals of old, the Battalion represents mankind's last chance – if it can survive.

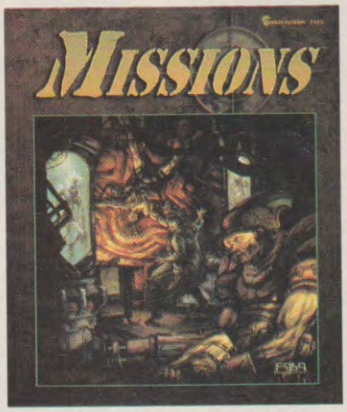
Starblade Battalion Mekton describes all three groups in detail and is packed with advice on setting up a campaign in this turbulent future. Read a full review in the next issue of **arcane**, out on 27th March.

The Battle of Coventry and Missions

Scenarios and adventures for *BattleTech* and *Shadowrun*



Two new books are on their way from FASA – *The Battle of Coventry* for *BattleTech* and *Missions* for *Shadowrun.*



The Battle of Coventry is a scenario pack that allows players to re-create the critical engagements in one of the most important 'Mech battles in the history of the *BattleTech* universe, as described in the *BattleTech* novel *Malicious Intent* by Michael Stackpole (**arcane** 6, 7/10).

Players can take command either of the forces of the attacking Jade Falcons or of the Inner Sphere troops whose task it is to hold one of the critical planets in the Lyran Alliance. The results of the clash affect billions of people.

Missions, on the other hand, presents a group of adventures for *Shadowrun,* all of which make use of the new rules and suggestions from the *Shadowrun Companion* (**arcane** 16, 7/10). The adventures are intended to provide graphic examples of the new systems and how they can add even more excitement to the game. Each scenario also illustrates one of the alternate campaign suggestions presented in the *Companion,* including a special operations unit on a dangerous undercover mission and a DocWagon paramedic team who find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place when they receive an emergencu call from a client from the midst of a vicious firefight.

We look forward to publishing full reviews of both these books next issue month.

Parma Fabula Storyguide Screen

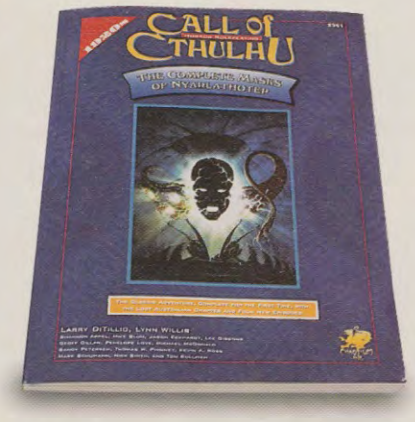
Referee's screen for *Ars Magica 4th Edition* on the way

Atlas Games' first support material for its new 4th edition of the classic *Ars Magica* roleplaying game (**arcane** 15, 9/10) comes in the form of a referee's screen and accompanying booklet.

The screen itself will be the usual four-panel cardboard affair, replete with all the tables and reference charts that an *Ars Magica* referee needs to adjudicate combat and spell-casting. The booklet will include a wide variety of resources for the referee, including artifacts, *objets d'art* and other items, a complete and fully described library designed with the new rules that can be dropped into your group's covenant with a minimum of fuss and a company of mercenaries suitable for use as either NPCs, followers or guards.

Atlas are also planning a range of new sourcebooks and supplements for *Ars Magica* and we'll bring you more details about them in the future.

WIN a copy of Call of Cthulhu PLUS! two complete campaigns!



We've got five sets of books to give away in the ultimate *Call of Cthulhu* competition

This month sees the release of not one but two utterly superb books for Chaosium's classic game of cosmic horror, *Call of Cthulhu. The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* (page 56) returns one of roleplaying's best-known campaigns to print, and includes material that was cut from the original release. The result is quite simply the best campaign for any roleplaying game ever written. And, as if that wasn't enough, Pagan Publishing has finally finished work on *Delta Green* (page 58), its mammoth sourcebook for playing *Call of Cthulhu* in the modern day.

Thanks to those kind-hearted folks at Chaosium and Pagan Publishing, we've got no less than five copies of each of these books to give away, together with five copies of the *Call of Cthulhu* rules. If you fancy winning one of the best roleplaying games of all time, together with two of the best sourcebooks ever released for it - enough to keep even the most dedicated groups happy for months on end - all you have to do is answer the question at the head of the column to your right...

OUR RULES MAY BE MEANINGLESS ON A COSMIC SCALE, BUT THEY'RE ALL THAT KEEPS US SANE...

1. All entries must reach the arcane offices before the coming of the End Times, when the Great Old Ones will return and destroy us all - Friday 11th March, as near as we can reckon.
2. Employees of Future Publishing, Chaosium, and Pagan Publishing are hovering at the edge of sanity already, so, in the interests of their mental health, they are banned from this competition.
3. Likewise, one should not be too keen to unearth the truths of our petty existence on this world and so only one entry is allowed per person.
4. When Great Cthulhu awakens from his slumber, society as we know it will collapse and we'll all be in trouble. Until that frightful day, though, the editor's decisions will hold sway.

Q *Call of Cthulhu* was inspired by the novels and short stories of American author H.P. Lovecraft. What names do the initials H.P. stand for?

Just mark your entry 'Argh! Arghhh! Arggghhhhhhh! No! No! Noooooooooooo!' and send it on the back of a postcard, or e-mail it to the **arcane** inter-dimensional gate at:

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COMPO RESULTS

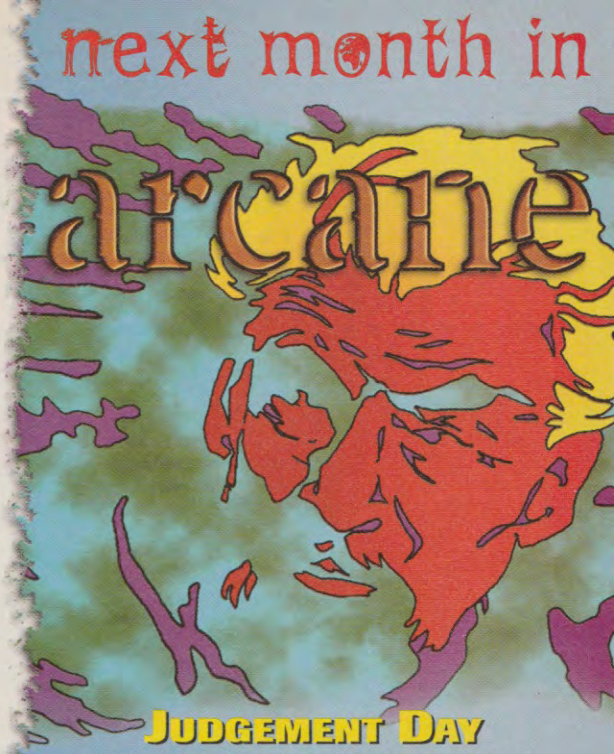
"Is this a rather spiffing little letter opener I see before me?"

Barry Forshaw of Newcastle/Tyne, Paul Fricker of Buckingham, Helen Keeble of Storrington, Anders Persson of Nässjö and Gordon Stewart of Alloway win a fancy Daggerfall dagger each.

"Hit me!"

Jonathan Baddeley of Newcastle\Lyme, Reamonn Byrne of Kilmacthomas, Allen Farr of Ardkeen, Mark Rafferty of Lisburn and David Wright of Dunfermline win *Johnny Mnemonic* on video. Lucky beggars.

next month in arcane



Judgement Day

In Nomine has finally arrived. The roleplaying game of devils and angels stalks the shop-shelves of the world. But is it such a big deal - the revelation it's perhaps thought to be? Andy Butcher consigns it to gaming heaven - or hell.

Battle Ye Not With Monsters

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It's character building

who decides what character you play in a roleplaying game? The dice, the player or the referee?

ANDREW RILSTONE

Andrew is the editor of *Interactive Fantasy*, the journal of roleplaying and story-making systems, and is also a regular contributor to arcane.

IN THE OLDEN DAYS, it was pretty much taken as read that the dice decided what character you played. You sat down around a table, tore off a sheet from your Official Character Sheet Pad™ and threw three six-sided dice for Strength, Dexterity and (in the Fifth Form) Penis Size. High 'ST' meant you were a fighter, high 'DX' meant you were a thief, and high 'PS' meant, er...

Okay, it wasn't always that crass. One of the great selling points of *Traveller* was that the dice didn't just give you a list of numbers and skills – they produced a little Curriculum Vitae. 'Drafted into the navy at 17, kicked out at 23 with a disturbingly high gambling skill...' It was the sort of thing you could use as a starting point around which to build a life story for your character. Random dice throws can often throw up ideas which you wouldn't have thought of off the top of your head. In the super-hero game *Villains and Vigilantes*, the dice provided you with a list of super-powers, and left you to work out how they fitted together. 'Hmm,' you would say, 'I wonder why this character has Telepathy and Water Breathing skills. I know! He was a research scientist studying the paranormal abilities of dolphins – he must have injected himself with dolphin blood!' All well and good, but not much use if you had set your heart on playing a starship trooper from Warlock Dimension.

Enter *Champions*, the first points-based character generation system. No dice involved – the player gets to create a character, completely out of his or her head. An ex-SAS serviceman with a bionic eye? Be my guest. The ghost of a cavalier swordsman returned to Earth to right wrongs and protect his family? You got it. *Champions* begot *The Hero System* which begot *GURPS*. These days, I think that this is the most common sort of character generation system. Player-creativity is the order of the day.

At the other extreme are games such as *Feng Shui* and *Star Wars*, in which you don't really create your characters at all – instead you chose a template. Some people say that this is simply the old *D&D* class system by another name, but in fact templates are much more like off-the-peg characters – not merely a wizard but a drunken Jedi Knight who flunked his training. This, of course, has two enormous advantages: you can't ever be stuck for an idea, and no player can ever create a character who simply doesn't fit in with the campaign. On the other hand, a lot of players find the idea of being limited to a dozen or so stock characters, well, limiting. And (it must be said) most of the games that have used it successfully have been comic book-like, cinematic RPGs where playing one-dimensional characters is an advantage.

Some referees, myself included, have taken this idea to its logical conclusion. Why let the players think up characters at all? Why not just give them one created by you, the referee, which is guaranteed to be intimately bound up with the plot and amusingly linked to the other PCs in the game.

It can work. But whenever I've tried it, I've always found that there's something missing. Players seem far more committed to characters they have created themselves than with ones the ref has plonked in front of them. Games that involve pre-set characters can easily feel much more like play-acting than roleplaying.

So, which method is best?

I'm not going to tell you, partly because if I did you'd probably say I was an evil bigot trying to lay down the law and force everybody to play in my One True Way, and partly because I don't know.

What I *do* know is that the decision about the method you use radically affects the type of game you end up with. I think it may affect your game more than the rules system you select, more than the world you set your game in – perhaps even more than the scenario you run.

Consider this. You write a scenario about a nasty alien life form with weird shapeshifting powers getting loose on the hold of a rickety old starship. You decide to use a system based on character allocation, and give each player a space marine to play. Naturally, you ensure that all the space marines have got different skills, and personality traits that will cause them to disagree and irritate each other. Result: an atmospheric, scary, paranoid game of crawling around dark, smoked-filled ventilation tubes.

But suppose you used an open-ended system, and told the players they could design any character they wanted. One comes up with an alien mystic, who wants to preach peace to the aliens, another dreams up a cyborg killing machine who thinks the right way out is to set the ship for self-destruct. The third is a space-thief straight out of a *Stainless Steel Rat* novel who wants to jump into an airlock and leave, and the last is a galactic police officer who wants to arrest him. Result: the characters spend the scenario fighting among themselves and the action never gets near the ventilation shafts. It ends up feeling like an episode of *Red Dwarf*, which is great if that was what you wanted, but a bit of a bummer if you were hoping to run *Aliens*.

All of which makes me wonder. We may spend weeks pondering whether to run a sci-fi campaign or a fantasy one, and months writing our scenario, but how many of us give any thought to the type of character generation we use? If something this basic can have such an impact on our games, I wonder what other trivial decisions can effect them. Are games played around the kitchen table radically different to ones played in armchairs in the sitting room?

Think about it.

"Games that involve pre-set characters can easily feel much more like play-acting than roleplaying."

BRIGHT IDEAS

Here are some examples of interesting character generation:

Amber includes a questionnaire, encouraging players to think about their character's pets, favourite food and bedroom decor.

GURPS: Goblins contains a table to establish what sort of mistreatment the PC suffered from as a child, for example 'shoved up chimney'.

Lost Souls contains the 'cause of death' table for ghostly PCs, which includes such delights as 'ate army rations' and 'urinated on live wire'.

Warhammer RPG contains nearly 100 character careers, including 'rat catcher' and 'hypnotist'.

THERE'S MORE

As regular readers of **arcane** will no doubt have gathered by now, Andrew Rilstone is an opinionated kind of guy, and if you don't believe us take a look at his world wide web page at `http//www.aslan.demon.co.uk`

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Chaos rules

According to **craig cartmell**, games companies have led roleplayers to rely too heavily on rules and accessories. He urges referees to abandon the rulebook and learn how to fly by the seat of their pants.

"YOU KIDS HAVE IT EASY. In my day you had to make up scenarios, in fact you often had to make up your own rules." Sound familiar? Every club had one, the man who can remember original *D&D*, as well as tank-tops and flares.

He bores you to death, right? Well try listening to him sometime. Hear the passion in his voice, the fun he had when things were simpler and the gaming companies didn't control the world. You soon realise his early experiences of roleplaying were different from yours. This was spontaneous creativity. Few rules meant few restrictions. The referee was god, not the games company. So what has happened?

For a start games companies grew up. Originally a collection of spotty teenagers and elderly eccentrics, now they're dominated by suits, and the games they sell are complex. To play them well you must have studied the player's handbook, spent days preparing your character and read a long intro to a scenario designed by an American genius whose IQ equals your height in centimetres.

For the ref life is even more difficult. You must buy the player's book, the game master's book, the supplements, the encounter books and all the novels. I doubt many English literature graduates have done so much reading.

So what happens when you begin to play? For a start the players have tough characters. No more wimpy 1st level fighters. Now they're vampires, cyber-enhanced nightmares and so on. They also have to 'get into character'. Half the evening is wasted this way. The other half is also lost as the poor ref struggles with the 1,000-page rule system. The restrictions of the rules tend to limit the ref's creativity. Some companies have recognised this and simplified their systems, but not their worlds.

So are we doomed to a future dominated by CCGs and Sega/Sony/Nintendo? I hope not, for there is a way to return to the days when creativity was valued more than rules knowledge – fly by the seat of your pants!

> **"Return to the days when creativity was valued more than rules knowledge – fly by the seat of your pants."**

Firstly minimise your equipment. While you will need pens and paper, and the most basic set of generic rules you feel comfortable with, you don't need any other printed matter, except where this is diversionary (ie. having Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* peeping out of your bag can be effective).

Secondly, think about your preparation. Players need a character either diced up or suitable for the chosen set of rules. The ref, on the other hand, doesn't need to do any preparation at all, except perhaps get a good night's sleep and put the beer in the fridge.

Finally, consider the game. Once you start all rulebooks are forbidden to players. The rules are yours to do with as you feel necessary. Now the only thing between you and ridicule is your creativity. Here are a few guidelines I follow when I'm flying by the seat of my pants (ie. most of the time):

- Keep a few notes as you go along. Things that may affect future play such as NPCs and maps.
- If your players like a scrap, give them one. If they want to investigate, give 'em something to sniff around.
- If someone voices a good idea or a worry ('ssshh lads, there may be wolves around here') feel free to use it.
- Play every NPC as if they were your own PCs, or perhaps model them on people you know. I have a band of goblins led by a 4' John Wayne, and a gnome anti-druid modelled on Gerry Adams (not nice).
- Purple prose can be hard to improvise, so keep descriptions down to what the players can see.
- Describe encountered critters, never name them. Let the players decide what they are. This often heads off the 'It's only goblins lads, let's 'ave 'em!' routine.
- Reward heroic actions with success where this does not overly imbalance the game.
- Do not be afraid to kill a character for repeated acts of suicidal stupidity.
- It is more important to have a sense of natural justice than an encyclopedic knowledge of the rules.
- Allow mapping only to characters with the right tools and skills listed on their sheets. If asked for them, give all measurements in paces or cubits.
- An undetectable trap is a waste of time.
- If a character reacts to something s/he could not have known about, warn the character. A second offence could be justifiably fatal.
- Booty should match the challenge, but a good rule of thumb is that a hungry character is an adventurous one.
- Every magic item should be unique. It need not be powerful, but it should be interesting.
- Make magic, well, magic. NPCs should use impressive verbal, somatic and material components.
- Don't ref for more than half a dozen players at once.
- Puzzles are like traps. If they're unsolvable then you might as well not bother.

Each ref has his or her own style, and this is how I do it. I find that flying by the seat of your pants, although frightening at first, brings back spontaneous creativity into games. After all, what have you got to lose but your credibility?

CONJURE UP THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE
Magic in RPGs should always be suitably impressive. Compare the following two statements:

a) 'Three bolts of blue fire whirl away from his fingertips. Unerringly they seek you out in the midst of the mêlée, weaving their way past struggling bodies. Their hits are like fire and ice combined, leaving smouldering holes in your clothes. You take three wounds for seven damage.' (Engrossing stuff.)

b) '3 magic missiles hit you for 7 damage.' (Wake me up when it's over.)

COMPARE AND CONTRAST
Give your magic items a character and a description. Again, compare the following two statements:

a) 'The sword is fully the length of your arm and has a two-edged blade in the Hyrkanian style. Its edge is of bluish steel that does not need the attention of a sharpening knife. The hilt and crosspiece are of polished brass, finely etched with hunting dogs. The blade is balanced by a knob of meteoric iron. The binding of the hilt is of a coarse, yellowish hair – possibly horse or even griffon mane.' (Wow, really?)

b) 'It's a +1 Longsword.' (A tad on the dull side, don't you think?)

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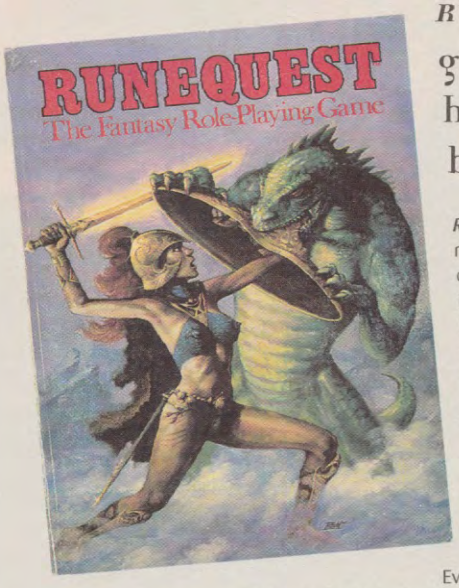
RuneQuest

RuneQuest trampled the insipid medieval games that came before it beneath the hooves of a bison-riding praxian barbarian. Dan Joyce eulogises.



Designed by Steve Perrin, Ray Turney, Steve Henderson and Warren James, based on the universe created by Greg Stafford

Published by Games Workshop (under licence from Chaosium) in 1980, £7.95 for the boxed set, about £4.50 for the rulebook

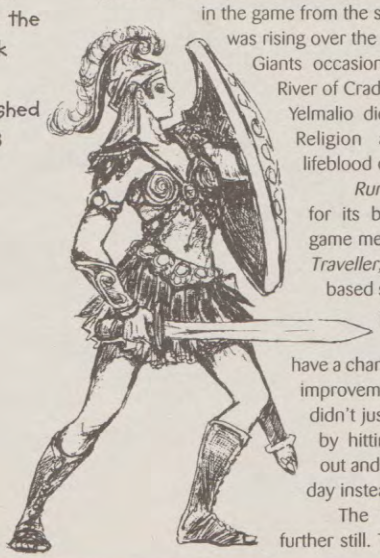
First Published in 1978

***RUNEQUEST* BROKE** the FRP mould. You weren't stuck with character classes. You didn't find it harder to hit a slow moving guy in plate armour than an Errol Flynn in a silk shirt. And you weren't expected to head straight for the gold left piled in that bizarre dungeon, a few miles west of Anyhowtown in Tolkiensville. It was everything that the 'first generation' games had failed to be.

It was ahead of its time. Even the adventure bundled with the Basic Set that many UK players will have begun with didn't start – as many of the late '70s games did – with 'steps leading down'; it started, near as dammit, with Biglaugh Bigclub crashing in through the front door of Gringle's Pawnshop to create a diversion for a robbery.

From day one, knocking around in Apple Lane, you were in the world. Not just any old pseudo-medieval world either, but a rich tapestry with threads of Mesopotamia and Ancient Greece. Glorantha was a Bronze Age world – hoplites with horse hair plumes, rather than knights in armour – where even the fantasy staples such as Elves and Dwarves (Aldryami and Mostali) had an interesting slant.

Greg Stafford has been writing about Glorantha since 1966, a dozen years before the roleplaying game was born. So the gods, the history and pre-history of the world were bound up in the game from the start. The Red Moon really was rising over the Lunar Tarsh, the babes of Giants occasionally did drift down The River of Cradles, and the old priests of Yelmalio did sit staring at the Sun. Religion and history were the lifeblood of the world.



RuneQuest wasn't only a hit for its background, however. Its game mechanics were great. After *Traveller*, it was the first skills-based system. And *RuneQuest's* percentage system was easier. Anyone could have a chance of doing anything, and improvements were realistic. You didn't just get better with a sword by hitting things; you could go out and practice for eight hours a day instead.

The combat system went further still. The authors were Society for Creative Anachronism buffs (essentially a re-enactment society), so they knew how weapons handled and what armour did. In the game, a roll of a D20 gave you one of seven different hit locations. Armour blocked damage, rather than making you harder to hit. Weird events, such as getting an arrow in the heart or having your shield strap break, were accounted for by critical hit and fumble tables.

These are things many games take for granted now, but *RuneQuest* pioneered them, using a system that was, arguably, faster, more fluid, and just *better* than many that followed. It was such a success that simplified versions of the same system were ported over into Chaosium's other games: *Call of Cthulhu*, *Stormbringer* (later *Elric!*), *Ringworld* and *Superworld*.

At the front of 5th edition *Call of Cthulhu*, we are told: 'Special acknowledgement is due to the original authors (especially Steve Perrin) and play group connected with the 1978 roleplaying game *RuneQuest*...' Mark Morrison [who worked on *Cthulhu 5.2*] has remarked that when he wishes to see how some problem of physical action is handled in a game, he turns first to *RuneQuest*. He is not the only one.'

The supplements and scenarios for *RuneQuest* followed the same high standards set by the game. Two deserve particular mention: *Cults of Prax*, first published in 1979, and *Cults of Terror*. These books provided you with the religious – and hence also political – background to the area around Prax and Dragon Pass. They covered everything from the cosmic struggle between Law and Chaos (*RuneQuest* picked up on Michael Moorcock's concept of Chaos), to the minutiae of what a Rune Lord of Orlanth, a storm god, was obliged to eat on Holy Days. It's fantastic stuff. You're even given a kind of 'player's eye view' (or NPC's eye view) of the Cults through the eyes of an Issaries trader and an Irripi Ontor disciple.

"The Third Edition lost its unique flavour. Halflings had crept into the rulebooks – the writing was on the wall."

RuneQuest was great – so what happened? Chaosium sold the licence for *RuneQuest* to Avalon Hill in 1983. The Third Edition was set loosely in Europe in the early hundreds AD. You could still play in Glorantha if you wanted to, but the flavour of the background world no longer permeate everything. Halflings had crept into the rulebooks – the writing was on the wall.

The rules were probably improved, but the production values were low – the books had thin paper covers. And the game wasn't really supported. Avalon Hill later released a (better produced) softback Forth Edition, but it hadn't evolved from the Third Edition, and by then *RuneQuest* had begun to be overtaken by newer games with improved rules.

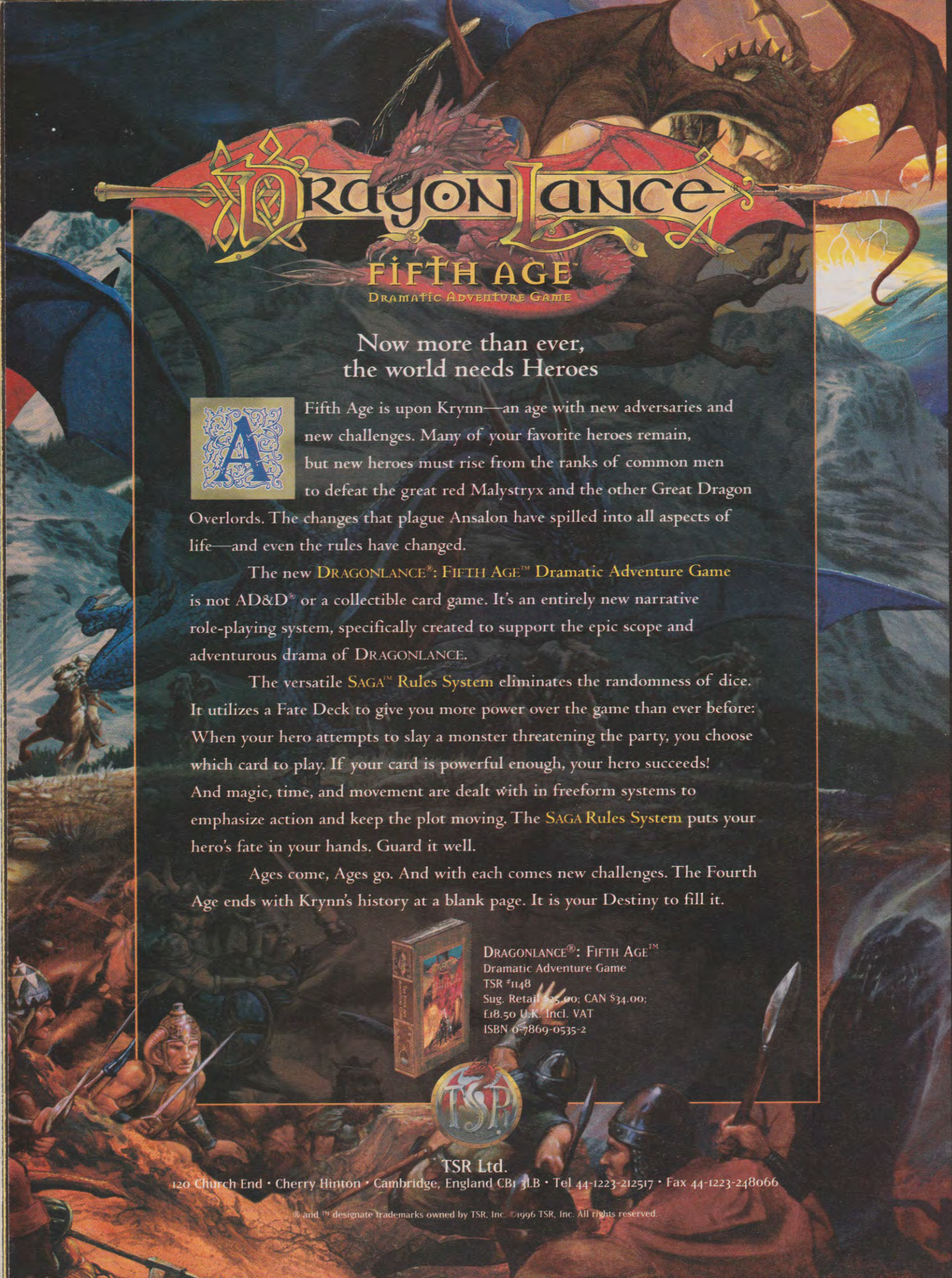
And yet *RuneQuest* still came fifth in our readers' poll of top games (**arcane** 14). If you've played it, you'll know why. If you haven't, scour the second-hand ads.

A NEW ADDITION

Good news for Glorantha addicts – Chaosium is due to release a new RPG set in Greg Stafford's world this year. More news when we have it.

CULT STATUS

So why was it called *RuneQuest*? Runes are symbols of power – the levers by which magic works in Glorantha. All religious cults are allied to a number of runes, which dictate pretty much what the cult is all about. Someone who, by trial and effort, comes to embody the best of what the cult represents, is elevated to the status of 'Rune Master'. And that is the goal of most characters.



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Looking for the Truth

True roleplaying by mail is almost as rare as three-sided dice. This month Matthew Green explains why, and also takes a look at a new PBM that offers this endangered form of gameplay.

THE TROUBLE IS, TRUE ROLEPLAYING means that you can do just about anything you want. You just look across the table at your referee and tell them that you want your character to attempt to convert the recently found stash of root vegetables into a deadly booby trap... Okay, not everyone is going to want to do something like that, but having the freedom to come up with your own bizarre strategies and style of gameplay is what makes roleplaying so much fun. The referee will evaluate your actions and give you a result. 'The advancing dragon neatly side-steps the scattered parsnips and fries you alive.' But hey, at least you tried, right?

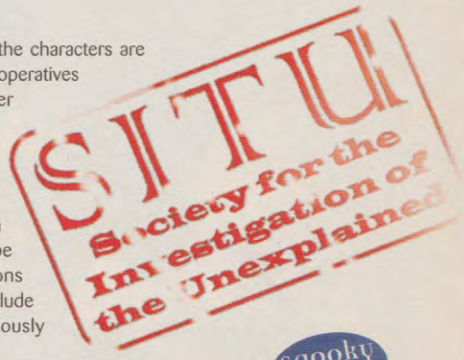
Most play-by-mail systems are largely operated by computer, and as such can never really give a player true freedom of action. This month the PBM column is devoted to those of you that want more – complete freedom of action in a PBM. On the whole this is only possible with a hand-moderated game. You write the instructions, and they are evaluated by a traditional, human being-style referee.

Good examples of these hand-mod games are hard to come by. There are only so many players that they can accommodate, and once the games are fully subscribed you'll have to resort to selling your granny to be allowed in. The games are not run solely for profit, and referees will often spend several hours carefully writing an atmospheric turn result for each and every character being played. At best, such games can usually never hold more than 100 or so players. If you are interested in playing the game outlined below I recommend that you sign up without delay.

Unexplained

Undying King Games, £10 for set-up and three turns, future turns £3 each.

Have you ever felt like a pawn in some huge and unguessable conspiracy? Ever wondered if the Truth really is Out There? Players in this game have the opportunity to tailor-design their own characters and get involved with the mysterious SITU organisation – the Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained. Each character, whatever his or her initial background, has come to join the society as a volunteer interested in pushing back the boundaries of the unexplained. Once in, the characters are placed in small cells of six operatives (that's you and five other players), and given the resources required to investigate a single 'mission', which lasts for 12 turns. When the investigation is complete you can be reassigned to new missions which may or may not include operatives you have previously worked with.



As play progresses you slowly build up more of a picture of not only the strange things that you are investigating, but also the SITU organisation itself. Worthy operatives may even gain promotion within the organisation, and as such are expected to keep sensitive information away from the lower-ranking agents – you know, steal the black box flight recorder before the rest of the party arrive at the crash site, that kind of thing. Essentially, though, the majority of play is about party unity and sharing information.

One of the best features of this game is that although each player is only directly involved with one mission at a time, there are always many other investigations simultaneously being carried out by other cells. Those players attempting to get a wider picture can stay in contact with operatives they have worked with in the past, and generally try to increase the number of contacts that they have within the organisation. Theoretically, it might be possible for agents to aid each other even though they may be assigned to different missions. It's all deep, dark and challenging roleplay.

Turn orders are written entirely in free text, as much or as little as you like, and the orders of all six characters in each 'party' are evaluated together to produce the overall party turn result. Single turn results are typically around 3,000 words in length, and are also supplemented by a regular SITU newsletter outlining some of the other missions that are currently underway.

The game is pure narrative and, as such, interactive fiction at its best. For more information contact:
Undying King Games, 156 Hurst Street, Oxford OX4 1HG

spooky fact

There's a real life version of the Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained. Well, a virtual version. It's on the internet – somewhere.

Patience is a virtue

For those of you with a little more patience, listed below are two other highly regarded hand-moderated games. Each may well have a waiting list before you are allowed entry, but if you're keen drop them a line asking for further information.

Green Sun: **Design your own alien life form, and begin play in control of just one planet and a basic technology. This is an open-ended space opera, which should see you eventually building huge fleets of advanced star cruisers and expanding ever further across the galaxies. When you finally meet with other player-controlled empires you can expect long and protracted interstellar conflict.**

For more information, contact: Sevenstar Games, 24 Northbourne Ave, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1JG.

Vampire! **All players start off as newly 'created' vampires, somewhere in present-day London. The emphasis is on delving into the dark existence of the vampire and learning how to grow stronger. There are some great roleplaying possibilities for anyone keen on the horror genre and, what's more, start-up for *Vampire!* is free.**

For details, write to: Phildee Enterprises, PO Box 7, Rhayader, Powys, Wales LD6 5DW.

Drop us a line **If you have any PBM related questions please feel free to drop us a line here at arcane. We're especially interested in hearing from anyone who's recently won a PBM game, so that you can pass any advice or tips on to other arcane readers. Apart from the world-wide fame and goodwill this would bring you, you might even be lucky enough to win yourself the ultimate in sexy leisurewear – an arcane T-shirt.**

LAY DOWN T

Sometimes PCs fight it, sometimes they are guilty of it – either way crime is rife in RPGs and law enforcers must intervene to control the situation. ***Phil Masters*** *takes the stand...*

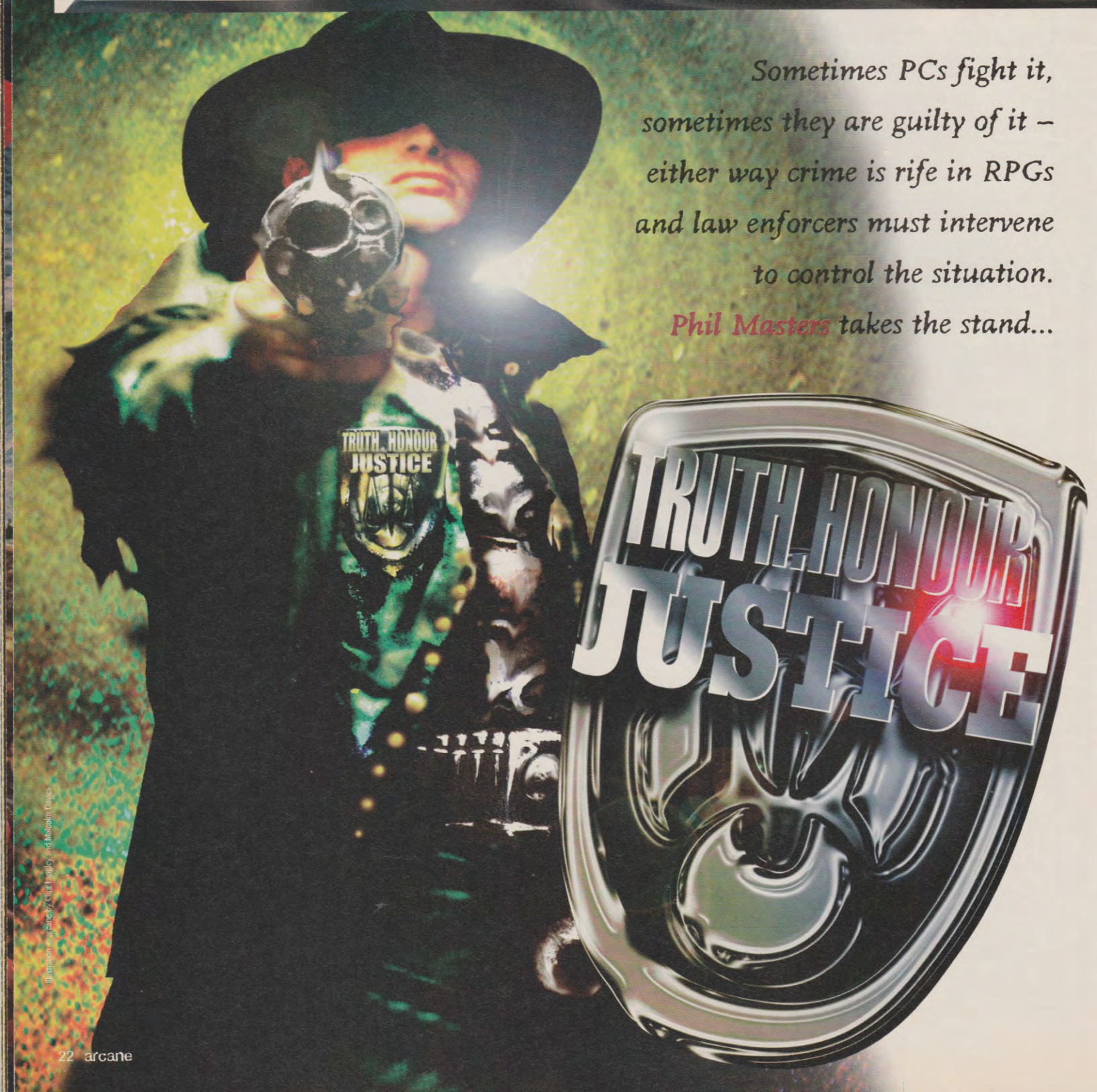


Illustration: Sterling W Gilliland and Malcolm Davies

THE LAW

the gaming magazine arcane

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

Horror game investigators break into the houses of cult leaders, fantasy warriors carve their bloody swathes, netrunners rip off data, and superheroes fly below legal heights.

Crime is commonplace in roleplaying games. Most often PCs both fight and commit it. Fictional adventurers tend to play fast and loose with rules while following some kind of moral code, and generally help stop other beings whose actions are blatantly immoral and unlawful.

Referees must ask themselves what the nature of crime and law enforcement in their world is. There can be a lot of variation in this, and different legal systems can make for significantly different scenarios, but if you don't have some idea how and why the law works, players are likely to have problems suspending disbelief.

Committing Crimes

The first law of laws for a referee is simple: laws exist for a reason. The exact reason can vary, but it's usually primarily to keep someone (or something) safe. In a civilised society, that someone will be the population in general (although in some democracies, this can mean that the majority pass laws that oppress minorities, such as adventurers or wizards). In a tyranny, it will be the people on the top of the heap. In a theocracy, it may be the gods and their temples, and in a faceless dystopia, it may be 'the system', or the computers that run it. There may be a few laws that don't serve this purpose, left over from past history, but by and large if a law doesn't serve a 'good' purpose, somebody will want to change it.

This doesn't necessarily mean that every written law will be properly enforced. In a dark future or grubby medieval setting, there may be laws against murdering peasants, and thousands of lower-class bodies in the gutters. But this simply shows that the nominal purpose of the law is not the same as the actual purpose. Try molesting one of the overlords, and you'll soon discover who the law exists to protect.

Even if there isn't a working system of law, people are likely to respond to provocation. One reason for having laws is to prevent campaigns of private revenge, which tend to lead to never-ending cycles of bloodshed.

In game terms, this means that PCs shouldn't be allowed to get away with murder, literally or metaphorically – at least, not on a regular basis. If they harm someone that the law is designed to protect, or break a law in sight of a law enforcer, then the referee should have a pretty good reason for them not to be pursued. And if they have any special powers or skills that keep them ahead of pursuit, there's a good chance that the powers-that-be will start thinking about counter-measures. And the authorities usually have massive resources, good advisers, and either public opinion or some tough bruisers on their side.

Investigation and Pursuit

Legal systems will usually be fairly well adapted to making sure that the laws are applied. This doesn't mean that all criminals are caught; in the modern world, vast numbers of crimes aren't even reported, let alone properly investigated, and a society in which every crime gets solved would be hard to imagine (and probably scary). But if a law is being openly flouted daily, or if the law doesn't ever protect who it's supposed to, something will be done. The laws may be changed, or the enforcers may just look for better ways to enforce them (or at least, to look like they are enforcing them).

"If the PCs are being detected, the question is: can they be tracked down by the techniques available? Are they up against the Keystone Kops, Judge Dredd or Inspector Morse?"

Assuming that the malefactors aren't seen and pursued the very moment they commit a crime, someone, somewhere, will probably investigate it. This is great for game purposes, because it leads to all sorts of mystery and fugitive scenarios.

Mystery plots with the PCs playing detectives are hard (though not impossible) to run in RPGs; clues are easy to miss, while magical spells, super-powers, and advanced technologies short-circuit many questions. If the PCs are being detected, however, the question is slightly different. Can they be tracked down by the techniques available? How well have they covered their tracks? Are they up against the Keystone Kops, Judge Dredd or Inspector Morse?

The investigators are usually police or guards. True police are a modern idea – invented in Victorian London – but some kind of enforcement has been needed as long as there have been laws. It has often been the duty of every adult to pursue anyone accused of a crime, but generally small communities have appointed some kind of watchman or sheriff. In larger communities this job may be handled by the army, but soldiers have other duties and may not be too well trained for policing, and in any case troops on the streets may sometimes be seen as a sign of tyranny.

Some societies, such as ancient Athens or Ottoman Turkey, organised squads of foreign slaves, who could be guaranteed not to have local loyalties, to keep order. In other cases, the job fell to guards employed by judges out of the court budget. Others again simply had a rag-bag of semi-official thief-takers hired by the citizens. What Sir Robert Peel created was a disciplined, non-military organisation which was usually well enough chosen and paid not to fall into corruption, and which could handle routine enforcement and detective work.

The chief (official) investigator will usually be a mid-ranking policeman, or 'watch captain'. In a system with strongly inquisitorial trials (see the next section), it may be the local magistrate. More powerful figures (chiefs of police, local lords and so on) may take an interest, especially if important people have been hurt or killed, but they don't usually investigate themselves – they have other worries, and their main plot function should be to put pressure on harassed detectives.

All sorts of people may assist the investigators, from lowly constables who provide muscle, to forensic scientists or specialist wizards. In a superhero game, heroes with super-senses or telepathy may have an important role. Combat skills, on the other hand, only become useful if things get complicated, or if a pursuit occurs after or instead of an investigation.

Pursuit scenarios are more fun for players with a less cerebral approach to RPGs, who may not be much good at investigations – but that doesn't mean that they have to be dumb chase scenes. They are especially interesting if the PCs are the quarry, either because they didn't commit

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

"If conspirators meet in the house of a tavern-keeper, and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the tavern-keeper shall be put to death."

The Code of Hammurabi, 2500 BC

A CASE TO ANSWER?

Once, English law had a rule whereby no one could be prosecuted for a serious crime without a grand jury deciding that there was a case to answer. This was supposed to prevent the Crown prosecuting people maliciously. However, in practice, grand juries tended to rubber stamp prosecutions, and the expense and hassle of the system means that it only survives in the USA, where it's written into the Constitution.

I Am The Law! - some fictional law enforcers

Name: JUDGE DEE
Source: Novels by Robert van Gulik
Character: Dee is a career official in Ancient China, responsible for justice in a series of cities; a judge in an Inquisitorial court, with limited technology but great ingenuity. He fits the Confucian ideal – stern, moral, and just, but compassionate.
Tactics: Dee is primarily a thinker, assisted by a small group of guards and assistants who provide muscle and special skills.
Quote: "This is the complete plan for the Rebellion of the White Lotus! But unfortunately all the names of persons and places are written in code..."
Similar Characters: Judge Fang, in Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age,* is almost a futuristic version of Judge Dee.

Name: 'DIRTY HARRY' CALLAHAN
Source: Films starring Clint Eastwood
Character: The archetypal renegade cop, Dirty Harry is tough, dedicated to justice more than law, and carries a big handgun.
Tactics: Harry is an uncomfortable cop. He prefers to get the job done reliably, and doesn't mind blowing away a few punks on the way. He looks like a hero because the crooks he's chasing are even nastier than him, if not as tough. A similar NPC could be bad news for law-breaking PC heroes.
Quote: "Go on, punk – make my day."

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Similar Characters: A lot of other characters owe Harry a debt, especially the heroes of many Hong Kong action movies. Judge Dredd ("I am the Law!"), in *2000 AD* and elsewhere, is a futuristic version – a superhumanly tough enforcer trying to keep the lid on a society gone mad, either the last hero in an insane world, or an ultimate fascist thug, depending on how you look at him. The trouble with Dredd as a character model, however, is that he doesn't have much character – he mostly serves as a hook for plots and a straight man for satire.

Name: INSPECTOR MORSE
Source: Novels by Colin Dexter, and TV programmes based on them
Character: Morse is a determined career policeman/investigating detective. A typical 'thinker', he is quiet and often hard to like. As a sensitive character dealing with the aftermath of crime and violence in a fairly realistic setting, he is gloomy and not very fond of other people. Like many fictional detectives, he has a clutch of outside interests to prove his sensitivity – in his case, classical music and crosswords.
Tactics: Morse uses deduction and his knowledge of human nature, along with official resources and forensic science, to determine who committed a crime. Sergeant Lewis, his sidekick, handles some of the more practical matters.
Quote: "Quiet, Lewis, please – I'm thinking."
Similar Characters: Commander Adam Dalgliesh (created by PD James) has much the same qualities. Many fictional detectives are thinkers, although the majority (such as Sherlock Holmes, the archetype) are freelance.

Name: Captain (later Commander) Vimes
Source: *Guards! Guards!* and later novels by Terry Pratchett
Character: A comic parody of the archetypal honest copper driven to drink. Vimes later sobers up, marries well, and is given control of law enforcement in his city. He is shrewd rather than brilliant, conscientious and secretly idealistic. Real evil makes him irritable.
Tactics: Vimes is primarily a practical sort of thinker, who can improvise his way through dangerous situations if he has to. He knows his city, and has a fair idea of human nature (although its worst aspects depress him).

© Carlton TV Productions

Quote: "I've never believed in that stuff – footprints in the flower-bed, tell-tale buttons, stuff like that... Policing's luck and slog, most of the time."
Similar Characters: Other comedy policemen tend to be Keystone Kop clowns or plodding dolts – Inspector Clouseau is a classic example. However, many fictional private detectives and secret agents have some capacity for humour.

Name: Deputy Marshall Gerard
Source: *The Fugitive* (film)
Character: A cool professional with a laid-back humour that comes from complete self-confidence.
Tactics: Gerard is ruthless, extremely meticulous, observant, a crack shot who always carries at least two weapons, and leads an efficient team of agents from the front. An opponent in Gerard's class should have even the cockiest PCs running scared.
Quote: "What I want out of each and every one of you is a hard-target search of every gas station, residence, warehouse, farmhouse, hen-house, outhouse and doghouse in that area..."
Similar Characters: Capable, realistic police characters appear in a number of other stories. However, other fictional manhunters tend to be freelancers, such as the superheroic Batman.

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the crime and are trying to remain free long enough to find proof, or because they did but they are 'honourable rogues'. This pits the huge resources and man-power of the authorities against the skills and heroism of the PCs. Combining pursuit with investigation can make for an especially tense and complex situation – see Deputy Marshall Gerard in 'I am the Law' on the left.

The Trial

If and when some characters (PC or NPC) are actually arrested for a crime (rightly or wrongly), many people may assume that it's all over bar the painful bits. Smart refs (and John Grisham) know better.

No doubt, in very early times, once the tribe decided who had broken the rules, they just thumped the miscreants, kicked them out of the area, or whatever. But the first time somebody yelled 'that's not fair' and somebody else said 'okay, let's sit down and talk this over', humanity had a trial system. And the next day, when everyone started telling each other who'd won the argument, we had courtroom thrillers.

There are a lot of ways of organising trials, and a lot of differences between legal systems, but at the most basic level there are two formats: Inquisitorial and Adversarial.

An Inquisitorial trial, as found in many European countries and beyond, is intended to find out what happened. In other words, it's part of the investigation; at the end, hopefully, it will find out who, if anybody, committed the crime, if indeed there was one, at which point the court can pass sentence. The judge is the chief investigator.

Of course, there may well be a clear suspect from the outset, and no one goes to the trouble and expense of setting formalities in motion until the investigators have gathered at least basic information – but that's just a matter of convenience. In abstract theory, if not always in real-world systems, the court could find anyone guilty of any crime, although if radically new evidence turns up, the trial will probably be stopped while everyone adjusts.

The most extreme kind of Inquisitorial trials tended to be conducted by (you expected them?) the Inquisition. The Inquisition was a medieval Catholic religious court, designed to root out heresy. Originally, it was (in its own terms) quite fair, but Inquisitors soon took to torture and persecution. Under the infamous Torquemada, with the support of fanatical monarchs, the Spanish branch extended its authority to other crimes, and helped to persecute the Jews; even the Pope couldn't control it. They had the power to arrest and torture, and to impose many punishments – although offenders had to be handed over to the civil authorities for the death penalty.

An Adversarial trial, as found in the UK and the USA, starts from a different point; someone is accused of a specific crime, and the trial is a contest between the accusers and the accused. The judge is there as a referee and a jury may decide the winner. Although the system can be flexible – a murder charge might be reduced to one of manslaughter, say – the result that matters is the yes or no answer, and it

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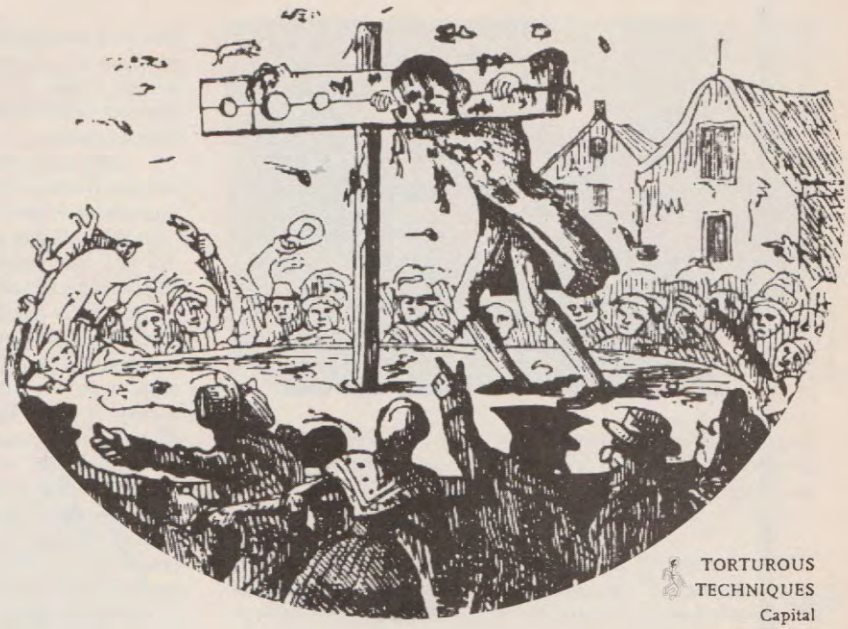
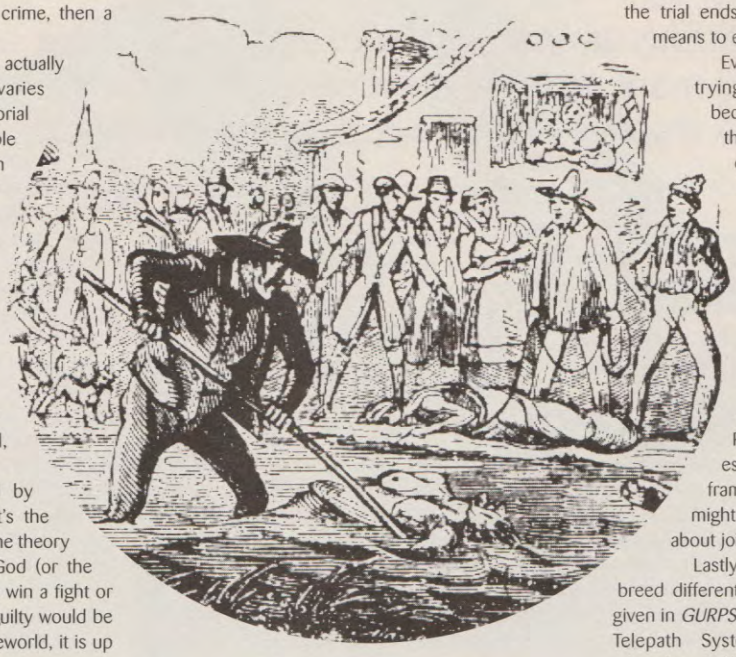


Kafka's *The Trial* (above) is about a man caught up in a bureaucratic nightmare. Medieval punishment was a lot more direct. Not for them drawn out investigations or prisons. Offenders were visibly punished – put in the stocks for minor offences (right), or drowned to death – a form of trial by order – if suspected of something serious, like being a witch (below right).

will be out of the question for anyone but the initial accused to be found guilty. If it turns out that a different person committed the crime, then a new trial will be needed.

Of course, how these models actually work in different societies varies immensely. In a tyranny, an Inquisitorial judge may go round torturing people to find the truth, while an Adversarial trial will be a rigged contest, designed to ensure the 'right' result. In a modern, mass-media saturated setting, the judge may end up having to work full-time to preserve the dignity of the court, while lawyers spend their time manipulating the press. In a futuristic society, the judge might actually be a computer – supposedly completely impartial, unflappable and all-knowing.

In a medieval society, trial by combat is not uncommon. If that's the case, it's time for the PCs to pray. The theory behind Trial by Ordeal was that God (or the gods) would help an innocent man win a fight or survive some injury, whereas the guilty would be struck down. If it appears in a gameworld, it is up to the ref to decide whether any gods really do intervene, or whether the verdict goes to the best and toughest fighters.



"In the Middle Ages, corporal punishment was the norm; after all, prisons couldn't be much worse than many peasants' normal lives."

But however the trial is conducted, and however warped the set-up, even in a tyranny, if there is a system of trials at all, it shows that the government at least wants to maintain the appearance of fairness. This can lead to scenarios full of tension and characterisation, as PCs struggle to make the system obey its own rules – preferably aided by a handful of honest lawyers, judges or jurors. In other systems, tyrannical or not, law enforcement can become corrupt, and the prisoner, guilty or innocent, must concentrate on buying, talking or finagling their way out.

Courts tend to be formal, intimidating places. In some cases, officials may try to make things as comfortable as possible for participants, but this isn't universal. In ancient Chinese law, for example, a trial is a sign of the breakdown of the sacred social order – the court's first job is to frighten anyone from letting things come to such a pass, and the judge may well actively seek to ensure that someone is punished, if not the criminal then a lying witness or whatever. Furthermore, the criminal must confess before the trial ends, so torture may be used as a means to ensure this.

Even a system which starts out trying to be fair and humane can become so complex and formalised that it is hellish. The classic example of this is a novel by Franz Kafka called *The Trial* – it's a surreal nightmare partly based on the bureaucracy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which Joseph K, accused of a crime, ends up trapped in a maze of procedures. K's situation is probably too bizarre to serve as an RPG scenario but a sense of Kafkaesque nightmare might give PCs some incentive to work especially hard to escape from a frame-up. Or, as in the movie *Brazil*, it might persuade a character to think about joining a revolution.

Lastly, note that different conditions breed different systems. One game example is given in *GURPS Supers*, which describes a Three-Telepath System designed to incorporate telepathy reliably into criminal justice. A just, high-magic society might invent something similar.

PUNISHMENT

Once the accused is found guilty, the court must assign a penalty. Usually, this means that the judge

TORTUROUS TECHNIQUES

Capital punishment can take many forms. The Romans went in for crucifixion, torturing criminals to death, while other convicted offenders have been hurled off cliffs, strangled, drowned, beheaded or stoned. Burning seems to have been a response to especially hated crimes, such as heresy or witchcraft (although not all witches were burned). Perhaps the commonest idea was hanging (killing with a broken neck if the victim is lucky, by strangulation if not). The modern-day USA has, of course, created the electric chair and lethal injection.

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Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, like Orwell's *1984*, is a good example of a futuristic society (Orwell's was futuristic when he wrote it) that has developed wide-ranging repressive laws. Anyone for *Paranoia?*

chooses from a range of options set by the law, perhaps taking note of comments from the jury, but other parties may also have an input; for example, Islamic law often allows the victim or their family to demand compensation or a more or less severe level of punishment.

In the Middle Ages and earlier, corporal punishment – floggings and amputations – was the norm; after all, prison couldn't be much worse than many peasants' normal lives, and cost a lot of money to run. (Prisons to hold suspects waiting for trial tended to be horrific, although rich prisoners could sometimes bribe the warders and bring in luxuries.)

Today, in the West, such things are seen as barbaric; however, in parts of the Islamic world, where the law is seen as coming from the Word of Allah, these old-style punishments survive. (Note that they have usually only been applied for substantial thefts. Also, stealing certain items that were banned or despised by Muslim law, such as wine or musical instruments, was sometimes not punished at all.) Being locked in the stocks for the public to pelt you with rubbish (or, if you were unlucky, in some places, stones) was another form of corporal punishment.

And another was branding. Again, this seems barbaric to modern sensibilities, but it had clear advantages; it could mark out a known criminal, so that, wherever he or she went, potential victims would know to be on their guard. Because of this, people who had been mutilated or scarred by accident would sometimes carry official certificates to prove that they weren't criminals. Some stories in the Arabian Nights feature characters who get beaten up in one place, go somewhere else, and then find themselves treated as villains because of their scars. (The modern idea of electronic tagging is meant as a gentler way to control criminals' visibility.) This could make scars gained in the course of legal adventuring a real liability for PCs.

In seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain, there was rather a lot of capital punishment (very popular with the public, who liked to see 'bad people' suffer). Prisons were still too expensive to serve as a punishment (and so sordid that diseases often killed a lot of the warders, as well as the prisoners). However, not every criminal could be hung, and the growth of colonialism offered an alternative: the crown would remit the sentence in exchange for the prisoner providing useful labour in the colonies.

After a while, the courts gained the power to impose sentences of 'transportation' themselves. At first, the destination was America, and after the American Revolution, Australia became the replacement. Transportation wasn't necessarily for life – many prisoners were allowed home after a few years, but others settled, and formed the basis for successful new communities. (Modern Australians are especially proud if they can trace their ancestry back to the 'first fleet'.) This system lasted until the mid-nineteenth century –

"Branding seems barbaric, but it had clear advantages; it could mark out a known criminal, so that, wherever he or she went, potential victims would be on their guard."

something similar could be used to interesting effect in an RPG, with, say, a colony land full of strange beasts and native magicians, or an SF 'prison planet'.

But slowly, prison was adopted as the modern, humane approach. High-minded rulers and reformers like to believe that penitentiaries can reform criminals (which annoys people whose main wish is to see evildoers suffer); however, such punishments haven't always been kind. Some prisons held criminals in solitary confinement, to meditate on their sins without giving each other ideas. This often just drove the prisoners mad.

A futuristic (or magical) dictatorship that keeps its iron fist inside a velvet glove could take this idea to an extreme, brainwashing prisoners and destroying their capacity for independent thought. (Alternatively, see the world of George Orwell's *1984*, which doesn't given a damn about reform, but which cannot tolerate any dissent.)

Prison scenarios should be a tough prospect in all but the most light-hearted, unrealistic RPG campaigns, unless the system is corrupt and the PCs are rich. A referee wishing to run such a thing for just a few sessions could always have the PCs infiltrate a prison to obtain information, or to aid a friend or employer to escape. Although they might represent a chance to acquire some underworld contacts and learn a few dubious skills, they will mostly see PCs sandwiched between tough professional criminals and guards who are very likely to be cynical, and maybe downright sadistic. That leaves them with few options; unless they want the sordid fun of becoming the toughest gang in the prison, they should be looking to prove their innocence (real or not), or to break out.

But unless they run a long way, they are still in trouble. Because breaking out of prison is against the law…

FAIR-MINDED CITIZENS? Trial by Jury seems to be an English invention, based on old ideas of a tribe or village giving its opinion on a case. Modern juries are usually 12 randomly-chosen citizens. (Other nations did have something similar, however – ancient Athens could see juries of up to 500 citizens.) The idea hasn't proved very popular outside the English-speaking world, though.

BODY PARTS Under Medieval Islamic law, stealing items worth a quarter of a gold dinar or more was punished by cutting off the right hand. Repeat offences would mean loss of first the left foot, then the left hand, then the right foot. Punishments in Europe at that time could be even more extreme, and the laws of evidence in Europe were a lot less precise.

For a Crime They Did Not Commit

A pixie hero wakes up to learn that the house of Alderman Fatwad has been burgled through a cat flap, and the Alderman has been left with a teenie-weenie sword in his throat. An Investigator breaks into a Cult Temple, only to discover that the cultists saw him coming and dialled 999. Doctor Brainwave persuades the (NPC) Defenders of Justice to have a little chat with the (PC) Nightwardens, who are showing up as suspects on the new police computer system (programmed by Brainwave Incorporated).

As if actual PC law-breaking isn't enough, PCs can be accused of things they didn't do; there's nothing like a little self-righteous indignation to encourage player-to-character identification. Using too many frame-up plots can look like gratuitous persecution, but for one-off scenarios, or as a way to start a campaign, they have many advantages.

The PCs' enemies may plant false evidence. A crime may (apparently) have involved the use of special powers that only the PCs are known to possess. Adventurers, who are probably known as capable people with a relaxed attitude to rules, make good scapegoats for clever crooks who want to misdirect the authorities. And sometimes, characters are just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Perhaps the authorities don't actually give a damn about real guilt or innocence – they just want somebody to string up, to show that they are tough on crime. And the sad fact is that many people are more interested in seeing somebody punished for a crime than they are in seeing the right people punished.

'Frames' happen in stories ranging from *The Count of Monte Cristo* through *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* to *The Fugitive.* Fictional villains are devilishly ingenious; realistically, investigators are mostly used to simple cases, are usually overworked and under pressure, and rarely bother looking for a complicated solution when a simple one is available. (In heroic fiction, this sensible approach is the sign of bumbling, dim-witted police.)

At this point, the PCs can either surrender, then work within the system to prove their innocence, or go on the run and either leave the area or, preferably, find the real criminals. The former is easier if some of the PCs or their close friends weren't implicated, but can get a little boring for the PCs who are locked away. (Or their fellow prisoners can make it unpleasantly exciting – see the comic series *Watchmen.)* Fighting a frame while in prison is perhaps the trickiest type of investigative scenario – but if the PCs start with a few good clues, and use their contacts well, it can be made to work.

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"These are the things that were dear to Finn —
The bay of his hounds, through the rough glen ringing,

The book

Although Celtic mythology is at the epicentre of the fantasy genre, we rarely exploit its full roleplaying potential. Jo Walton insists that there's more to Celtic life than meets the somewhat stereotypical eye.

THE GREAT OATH

"Heaven is above us and Earth beneath us and the sea is round about us. Unless the sky shall fall with a shower of stars, or unless the Earth be rent by an earthquake, or unless the waves of the blue sea come over the forests of the living world we will not give ground." Similar forms recorded in *The Tain* and by Celts enrolled by Alexander the Great.

The Celts lived in Britain and Ireland, and their traditions are part of our traditions. We still celebrate Halloween – Samhain – as the Day of the Dead. Celtic stories have become fairy tales and Celtic superstitions are still alive; beliefs about things that go in patterns of three, about white horses, lucky black cats and four-leafed clover.

What's more, we have plenty of archaeological evidence about Celtic society to draw on. Even better, we have a great deal of the Celts' myths, stories and poems. Many were written down between the 7th and 12th centuries, but in Wales, Ireland and Scotland some are kept in the oral tradition.

Celtic ideas are central to fantasy, and there are many overtly Celtic fantasy novels. We have enough information about the Celts that by putting these sources together we can bring them to life with all their vibrant energy to improve any fantasy game. They can be used as barbarians living on the fringes of civilised Empires or an independent nation. One character within a party can be a Celt, a party of mixed adventurers can visit the Celts and be baffled by the unusual culture, or the Celtic world can be the focus for an entire campaign.

Yet in our roleplaying games, Celts are far too often represented by a few token misunderstandings of druids and a few Highlanders.

The celtic world

"It is always a country where you can wander without aim, and where you can never know from one place what another will be like, or know from the one day's adventure what may meet you with tomorrow's sun." WB Yeats

The Celtic world stretches on forever, a patchwork of tiny kingdoms going over the horizon, stretching to the Otherworld where everything is larger than life and then on beyond. An adventurer could travel forever and always find hospitality and adventures; wars and hunting, beautiful countryside, famous champions and arcane druids, chariots, feuds, gods and mighty heroes.

In the world of the Celtic stories, everything is glorious, wonders abound and there is no requirement for things to be logical as long as everything makes a kind of emotional sense. It is a bright world, a world where honour is of utmost importance and the breaking of a magical

DEATH IN BATTLE I

"It is a wonderful thing, if I am but one day and night in the world, provided that my deeds live after me." Cuchulain, *The Tain*.

Honour and Gesas

"people may live after their lives, but not after their honour." Finn MacCool

Honour is absolutely central to the Celts. They go to absurd lengths to defend their honour, their fame and their good name. In *The Tain*, Ferdiad goes out to fight his best friend Cuchulain, knowing he will die in the conflict. However, his honour will suffer if he does not at least try to kill his friend. This is the most essential element of any Celtic game and also the hardest to convey to the players. It is easy to explain that there are no inns and that kingdoms are very small, but it is hard to convey that personal honour is the most important thing to every Celtic character, and then get the PCs to act as if this is the case. System mechanics – code of honour as a disadvantage or enforced use of alignment – can be used if necessary. A Celt will do anything to avoid a slur on his honour. Celts do not lie, in general, although tricking people is acceptable, if done cleverly enough.

The code of Honour of the Fianna

Should you wish to be a warrior, be quiet in a great man's house, and quiet in the mountain pass. Do not beat your hound without good reason. Do not accuse your wife of anything without proof. In battle, leave buffoons alone, they are just fools. Do not criticise anyone of high repute. Do not get involved in brawls. Have nothing to do with madmen and wicked people. Show two thirds of your gentleness to women, little children and poets. Do not be violent to the common people. Do not boast, or say you will not yield what is right; it is shameful to boast if you cannot carry out your claims. Do not forsake your lord as long as you live. Do not abandon those you are sworn to protect for gold or any other reward. Do not abuse a clan in front of their chief, because that is not the work of a man of gentle blood. Do not gossip or tell lies. Do not talk too much or criticise others. Do not stir up hostility against yourself. Do not frequent drinking houses, or make fun of old people. Leave poor people in peace. Be generous with your meat, and do not make friends with miserly people. Do not force yourself upon a chief, or cause him to say bad things about you. Keep hold of your gear; do not let go of your arms until the fight with its weapons-glitter is ended. Be more keen to give than to deny, and always be gentle.

Understanding Gesas

Gesas are taboos, magical restrictions that prevent or force a character to do, or not to do something. They can also determine how and when a character will inevitably die. In this way, they are a form of fate. They can be tremendous fun in a game, leading to endless complications as people try to get round a restriction they cannot break without penalty. Cuchulain had a gesa that he could not be woken up, he had to be allowed to wake naturally. Every time he was woken, disaster soon followed – this included the war of the Tain and eventually his own death. A character with this particular gesa would always have to take the first watch and could never rely on setting off early.

Fergus MacRoy had a gesa that he could never avoid a drink. This led to the death of Noisi and Deirdre and his own exile. Before that it must have led to a lot of hangovers. Gesas can be great and deadly things, and indeed should be. Meanwhile they can be wonderfully inconvenient in daily life. Death gesas in particular can be amusing. PCs may think it makes them safe from all harm to know that they can only be killed inside a house – it may even make them careless. Be sure to frighten them into seeing their gesa almost fulfilled if this seems to be the case. Also, it is a good idea to keep such things hidden. Diarmuid was doomed to be killed by a green boar with no ears. If he hadn't mentioned this to his best friend, who later dyed a boar green and cut off its ears, he might be alive today.

the din of battle, the banquet's glee,

and the blackbird singing in the Letter Lee."

# of Celts

the gaming magazine arcane CAMPAIGN IDEAS

restriction can mean certain death. It is also a world without clear borders between one country and another, between people and gods, between magic and the mundane.

Anything can happen – your hounds can chase off after a hind and find it brought down by the hounds of a powerful Sidhe lord, or you can simply go out fishing and see a horseman riding over the surface of the waves.

celtic society

This consists of peasants, warriors and kings. There are a lot of kings in the Celtic world – almost every hill has a hill fort with its own king and nobles, there to protect the peasants from the marauding kings and nobles of the next hill over. The Celts love fighting, feasting, hunting and nature. Their lives revolve around these activities. Magic is the province of the strange and arcane druids; these are the judges, priests, storytellers and teachers for the whole community.

Technologically, Celtic society is in the Bronze Age or early Iron Age, so weapons are made of these materials. Armour is leather, though many Celts disdain it, believing it better to fight naked and painted blue – some say the Gods protect those who dare to fight completely naked.

They have the wheel, which is most often used on battle chariots, but they do not have stirrups. Medicine, apart from magical healing, is very primitive indeed. The economy works on a system of barter, with the fundamental unit of worth being half a cow. Wealth is measured in terms of land, weapons and personal adornments.

Generosity with possessions is praised and considered a virtue. Interactions with other cultures are interesting, to say the least. Celts and settled, civilised and imperial peoples, such as the Romans, do not understand each other at all well. They cannot see what the other finds important.

Celtic interactions with Norse and Viking cultures are even more fascinating. Celts and Norsemen have very different codes of honour. Even where they can speak each other's language, misunderstandings of fundamentals are common. They have opposed views of what is right and fitting on many subjects. →

DEATH IN BATTLE 2

"Men went to Catraeth, ready for battle; Clear green mead was their feast, bitter the aftertaste, Three hundred under arms and giving battle – And after exultation, there was silence."
The Goddodin, Aneirin, sixth century BC.

DRUIDS

"The druids are concerned with affairs of the gods, the performance of sacrifices and the understanding of gesas. Many young people come to them for instruction and they are held in high honour. The druids judge almost all the disputes, and if any crime has been committed they decide it, determining awards and punishments."
From *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, Julius Caesar.

Illustration ©arcane by Alexis Liosatos

suggested systems

Everway
Wizards of the Coast/Rubicon Games

Probably the best system for running a Celtic game. Abandon the *Everway* background or take the party into a Celtic sphere. The way the game works allows the referee to take full advantage of the mythical and magical aspects without running into rules problems. The ref needs a grasp of the world and the worldview before doing this, but provided they have one, this can work very well indeed.

Suggested reading: David Cherry cards: *Time Life, The Enchanted World* and *Spells and Bindings;* Jim Fitzpatrick's *The Book of Invasions* and *The Silver Arm;* Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Summer Tree;* Katherine Kerr's *Daggerspell.*

GURPS Celtic Myth
Steve Jackson Games

The perfect book to use for a straight look at a game using heroic Celtic tropes. This book contains tons of information on the Celts and their way of life. The illustrations are regrettable, though. *GURPS* is a very realistic system but the book has a lot of ways around this and includes suggestions for running Celtic campaigns. Everything mentioned in this feature is gone into in some detail in this book. Highly recommended, but I would say that because I co-wrote it.

Suggested reading for a fully Celtic campaign:
The original sources: *The Mabinogion,* trans. Jones and Jones (Everyman edition); *The Tain,* trans. Kinsella. Lady Gregory's books of redactions of the myths, especially *Gods and Fighting Men.*

Pendragon
Chaosium

Pendragon is an Arthurian game, and the Arthurian mythos has its roots in the Celtic world of Sub-Roman Britain. There are supplements for Ireland and Wales. The Irish one in particular, *Pagan Shore,* is suitable for tweaking to make a more Celtic game. There are a number of ways it could be used – either by adjusting the technology and the anachronistic elements to produce a realistic fifth-century Britain, or by emphasising the magical elements and bringing in the Sidhe and the Otherworld elements to explain what is there in traditional Arthurian stories that wouldn't fit the period.

Suggested reading for Celtic Arthurian campaigns:
Gillian Bradshaw's *Down the Long Wind* – the first book of this trilogy, *Hawk in May,* especially, where Gwalchmai travels to the Isles of the Blest and meets Lugh of the Long Hand; Parke Godwin's *Firelord.*

Werewolf: The Apocalypse and Changeling: The Dreaming
White Wolf

A Celtic *World of Darkness* game could be strange and sinister. Shape-changing into animals is a common motif in the Celtic stories, and the *Werewolf* rules could be used for this. *Changeling* could also be used to play the Sidhe, although the more medieval races of fae, such as the Seelie and Unseelie Court, would have to be amended or omitted.

Suggested reading: Briget Wood's *The Lost Prince.*

Champions
Hero games

This would be great for a high-powered Sidhe campaign. Again the background would need to be established from elsewhere, but the rules would be perfect and encourage the right atmosphere.

Suggested reading: *Slaine, Lady Gregory* and the Jim Fitzpatrick books already mentioned; *Culhwch and Olwen* in *The Mabinogion.*

Toon
Steve Jackson Games

This could also be used for a rather more slapstick kind of Sidhe campaign, or for a Gauls vs Romans game rather like Asterix.

Suggested reading: *Asterix* books.

→ For ideas on how to tackle the culture clash between Celts and Romans, read *Winter Quarters,* by Alfred Duggan, and *Not For All the Gold in Ireland,* by John James. For ideas about the interaction between Celts and Vikings, try RA MacAvoy's *The Book of Kells,* and the *Harnmaster Orbaal* module.

celtic daily life

The king and his nobles live in duns – fortresses on hills, usually wooden-walled buildings. These comprise one Great Hall with alcoves around the walls where small groups of warriors gather to eat. Meat is roasted on a fire at one end and when it is served the biggest portion, the 'hero's share', is given to the greatest champion in the room. This can cause friction and even lead to full-scale war.

All weapons must be surrendered at the door to the King's Hall and are kept in a special weapons room there. Drawing a weapon in the King's Hall breaks the King's Peace and is punishable. However, taking any conflicts that arise outside the hall is perfectly acceptable, and warriors do fight a lot.

The druids are the judges and make the laws. Anyone who will not abide by the judgement of a druid is put under the Druid Ban, which means they are forbidden hospitality and forced into exile. The curse on Bres is a form of the Druid Ban.

myth & magic

Wonders – strange and magical sights, such as a tree burning on one side while remaining untouched on the other – are a common feature of the Celtic world. Such things should have no deep meaning or context, they are usually simply part of the scenery.

Magic done directly and on purpose tends to fall into various very specific categories. It is generally, but not always, performed by druids. There is much divination and finding out of gesas (see the Honour and Gesas boxout on page 30). There are also instances of people setting gesas on other people which then become binding.

There are many instances of people turning themselves and other people into animals, either for a short period, until a specific thing happens – for example, 'a year and a day, until you reach the house of Finn' – or permanently. In addition to that there are a few instances of invisibility, resurrection, making women out of flowers and other such things. There is, however, no combat magic at all. Magical weapons do exist – Cuchulain's spear Gae Bolga, which once slew ten men in one caste is a case in point. But there are no combative spells as such; this is regarded as cheating.

A word about the Sihdhe: Sidhe are not elves. They are not ghosts. They are not gods. They are some combination of the three, or rather our conceptions of those three things come in part from the Celtic beliefs about the Sidhe.

The Sidhe were just like everyone else, only bigger, better and more beautiful. They lived in the Otherworld, a country just like everywhere else only better, where it had a tendency to be summer more often than elsewhere.

Entrances to this world were through barrows, across the sea and through other watery and underground ways. Sidhe lords are very powerful. A game may be played with a party of Sidhe – see Suggested Systems on the left. In ordinary Celtic games, Sidhe make good patrons, allies or enemies. They have amazing magical

THE OTHERWORLD

"Pleasant to the eye are the plains of Erin, but they are a desert to the Great Plain. Heady is the ale of Erin, but the ale of the Great Plain is headier. It is one of the wonders of that land that youth does not change to age."

THE TWO FACES OF HOSPITALITY

"If the brown leaves falling in the woods were gold, if the waves of the sea were silver, Finn would have given away the whole of it."

abilities, but these tend to be innate skills rather than learned spells.

characters

The Position of Women

In historical Celtic society and in the stories, women are respected. The default position for a woman of any social status is to be a wife and mother, but there are plenty of examples of strong women who chose to be warriors (Skya, the warrior-tutor of Cuchulain), charioteers (Dectira), druids (Levarm) and powerful ruling queens (Maeve of Connacht, Rhiannon).

Marriage is considered to be important and something between equals – the examples of married couples in the stories show the woman to be at least the man's equal. In the few examples where this is not the case – the story of Branwen, for example – it is considered a shameful situation and a cause for war.

Learning was open to everyone of any sex or social class. So all the example character-types below can be considered suitable for characters of either sex, although any women who do not stay at home should be considered pretty strong-willed.

Bards, Ollaves & Druids

The mysterious and magical druids were very much a part of Celtic life, but they were extinguished by the Romans after withdrawing to Inis Mon (Anglesey). This means that very little is known about them, except that they wore black cloth robes. It may be best to keep them as mysterious NPCs, or to only allow PCs to be low-level initiates or bards with little knowledge, training and magic.

Warriors

The noble-born warriors of the King's Hall are the ideal PCs for a Celtic campaign. They fight with swords and spears and ride to battle in chariots. They are fiercely protective of their honour, eager for fame and enjoy life to the full. They wear woven cloth or leather armour with bare arms and legs. They often wear worked gold torcs around their necks and arms.

Charioteers

Charioteers may be young warriors in training, or lighter-boned people who are not strong enough to be warriors but are good with horses. Their role in getting the warrior to the battlefield and away again afterwards is essential. They dress similarly to warriors and they often have first aid skills.

Cuchulain's mother was a charioteer for her brother, King Connor. Cuchulain's charioteer was his best friend Laeg. A party can consist of warriors and their charioteers, who make excellent sidekick minor characters or NPCs, or can blossom into full characters in their own right.

Fianna

Fianna are war bands, warriors who have made a personal oath to the High King of all Ireland to give up family feuds and fight as directed. The requirements to join a fianna are strict (see the box on page 30 for more information about the fianna's 'code of conduct'). A fianna also makes an ideal adventuring party, because they can be sent anywhere to do anything.

scenario seeds

Fantasy staples such as stone castles, wizards and warren-like dungeons obviously have little place in a Celtic world. This is a good thing, but it forces you to think a little harder about plots for scenarios or campaigns.

For campaigns, the party-as-Fianna is probably the easiest to handle. In the tales, the Fianna of Finn MacCool fought all manner of battles and had numerous strange adventures – they fought the Fomorians, visited the Sidhe in the Otherworld, and took off after strange Faerie-style animals without hesitation.

When Celtic honour is thrown into the arena, even the simplest situation can blow up into an epic tale. For instance, one of the greatest battles, between Cuchulain of Ulaid and Fediad of Connachta, is over nothing more than a prize bull.

Here are some other ideas for roleplaying scenarios:

- If one of the party performs particularly well in hunting or fighting they can be given the hero's portion and get into real trouble with all the other warriors of the King's Hall.

- There are no inns, but every King's Hall and peasant's hut offers hospitality to passing travellers. The travellers are not permitted to pay for their hospitality, but are expected to entertain the Hall with stories of their travels.

- Druids are strange and unpredictable; they may decide to help or hinder an adventuring party. And they are very fond of riddles.

- There are no cities, no organised religion, no guilds and very few monsters. The supernatural is just the natural written larger than life. Adventures revolve around honour, the Sidhe, strange and magical happenings, wars between small kingdoms and the workings out of gesas.

- Gesas dictate the way Celtic people live and die. Breaking a gesa, even by accident, will swiftly have repercussions. They make good plot devices; use them.

- All Celtic myths have sad endings where the major characters die even though they may have gained the moral victory. This can be a satisfying way to end a Celtic campaign.

THE TALE OF BRES

"Without food quickly served,
Without a cow's milk, whereon a calf can grow,
Without dwelling fit for a man under the gloomy night,
Without means to entertain a bardic company,
Let such be the condition of Bres."

WONDERS

"On the bank of the river he saw a tall tree. One side of it from roots to crown was blazing with fire; on the other side grew green leaves".
The Mabinogion.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

"Beside him running on the water he saw a hornless deer and an eager white red-eared hound following after."
Gods and Fighting Men.

Oyez! Oye

Despite dead carrier pigeons and ambushed heralds, Andrew Rilstone is determined to communicate in a medieval fantasy world.

illustration ©arcane by Steve Kyte

We live in an age of sophisticated mass communication. At least, those of us living in developed countries do. If we didn't, you wouldn't be reading this. I wrote these words at my home in Bristol and then sent them across the Internet to the **arcane** office. After being designed, the pages were then sent to a printing house where thousands of copies were reproduced, all in the space of a month or so. But, of course, it was not ever thus.

Most of our fantasy roleplaying games are set in medieval or pseudo-medieval settings, worlds in which fast and effective communications of this sort are the stuff of, well, fantasy. Far too often, ideas from our information-rich age seep through into our medieval gameworlds, with somewhat unconvincing consequences. Just how did those peasants know that the king had abdicated? What makes you think that the merchant you've been dealing with knows when his ships are going to arrive in port, even to the nearest month?

Divided by a Common Language

Nearly everybody you spoke to in the last 24 hours was fluent in one language, probably English. If people regularly speak a second language, it is often one connected with their ethnic background. Medieval England, on the other hand, was bi- or even multi-lingual – you spoke a different language according to your class, profession and what you wanted to talk about. When the Roman Empire collapsed, it left its language behind. Even now the priests, scholars and universities still speak Latin among themselves. Books written in Latin are treated with special reverence, and if you want to get a suitably impressive education, one of the first things you might consider is learning some Latin grammar.

To further confuse things, in England, after William the Conqueror, the English nobles spoke French. Some of them never bothered to learn the language of the unwashed masses and, of course, none of the peasants ever knew French. A knight discussing his horse and armour, or a lady chatting about romance and fine clothes, would have done so in French. And a scholar would have talked about science or theology in Latin.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Paper was made in Spain as early as 1150, but it wasn't until the 14th century that someone worked out how to mass produce it. By 1465, Gutenburg had invented the idea of printing (on both sides of the paper) from metal presses.

Magic Matters

Fantasy worlds have one thing which the Middle Ages lacked – in a word, magic. Consider the following...

A crystal ball which really allowed a wizard to see what was happening 1,000 miles away would be a weapon of awesome power. He could know when enemy armies were approaching his city, get prior warning of political changes abroad and search the sea for important ships that had gone missing.

A group of wizards who were capable of telepathy would have a monopoly on long-distance communication. Perhaps they would serve kings and lords whose agenda they approved of, or perhaps they would turn into medieval media barons, invaluable for passing on information, but always tingeing it with their own beliefs.

A magic carpet or a winged horse would enable a messenger to fulfil his task many times faster than a rider on horseback, giving his master the edge in any war or conflict.

A wizard who could talk to or control animals would have a system for disseminating and collecting information far more reliable than any pigeon-post – he could tell his friend, the sparrow, to go and tell all the other birds to pass a particular message on.

The important thing is to consider the implications of any spell you allow into the game. Knowledge is power, and wizards with communication spells may have a means to knowledge of a mundane, but powerful, kind.

Telling Tales

We are used to receiving important information in written form: letters from the tax officer, newspapers, this article. In a world where few people could read and there was no efficient way of mass-producing written texts, most information, as well as entertainment and propaganda, was passed on by word of mouth.

> "Far too often ideas from our information-rich age seep through into our medieval gameworlds."

If you were the king, you could afford a fleet of heralds on fast horses to ride to the lessor lords of the kingdom and announce your edicts. There was a tradition in the ancient world of killing the bearer of unfortunate news, but in the Middle Ages heralds were usually treated with respect – killing the king's herald was an act of violence against the king. In Shakespeare's *Henry V,* Good King Hal makes sure that the messenger who has travelled all the way from France specifically to insult him is well treated and sent safely home. His quarrel is with the wicked French, not their herald. However, it wasn't always easy to tell whether a messenger, or indeed a written letter, really came from the king – this was why the tradition of signet rings and seals became so important. If the messenger had the king's ring, you knew he was genuine. Indeed, the carrier of the King's Seal became a sort of minister or ambassador, capable of making decisions on the king's behalf.

For the common people, news was just a matter of haphazard gossip. Perhaps you hung about at the market, hoping to pick up news from the next city ('They do say that the Queen has another boyfriend, and Mrs Miggins' cow is awful sick!'). If someone had been in a foreign country, then he could be guaranteed an attentive audience, and probably some free drinks in the local tavern as well.

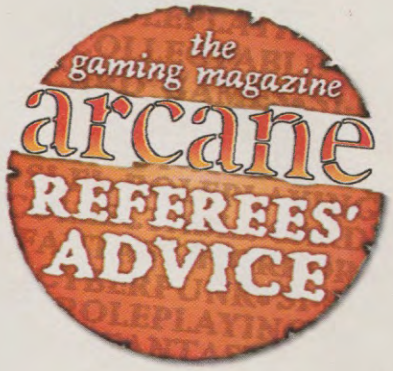
Not that these travellers' tales were particularly reliable. Most fantasy campaigns have neat and accurate maps, similar to a modern atlas. Real medieval people were more likely to have heard from a friend of a friend that there is a place called India (or maybe Africa, the two tended to get mixed up) where there were horses with horns in their heads, called Unicorns, or possibly Rhinos. And I hear tell that in Egypt, you can see the very barns where Joseph stored corn for Pharaoh during the famine in the Bible. Huge triangular things, they are. Some people said they're the tombs of dead kings, but that doesn't make much sense to me. More ale? Don't mind if I do.

The Written Word

On the bookshelves in my small flat, there are something like 600 books. In the 14th century, that would have constituted a medium-sized university library. Books were rare, expensive, precious things written by hand, on parchment or vellum, laboriously copied out by monks. This doesn't mean that they were all ornate tomes with illuminated capitals and gold-edged pages – they were more likely to be page after page of small, neat (or not so neat) handwriting. The monks saw it as a holy vocation (and also a tidy source of money for the Order) to reproduce, not only the Bible, but commentaries on the Bible, and works of philosophy and science that illuminated God's world.

NOT SOLD BY THE REAM

Parchment is made from animal skins which have been stretched out, shaved and dried. The finest sort, made from calf-skin, was called vellum. The most expensive of all was 'inter-uterine vellum, made from the skin of still-born calves. Guess there weren't any animal rights protesters back then!



Scenario Seeds

Missing Presumed Dead

Seven years ago, the king embarked on a great war in the Far North. Years later, a single, bedraggled squire found his way home on a merchant ship. He brought the terrible news that the Dark Lord had slaughtered the entire army and he was the soul survivor. As a result of this, the king's weakling brother has ascended the throne.

A pilgrim has just returned from the Holy Places, a journey of a year and a half. During his journey, he heard a traveller's tale about a crippled mad man living in the caves near the Dark Lord's castle, claiming to be the king of a far away land.

Could this be the true king, still alive after all this time? Or will the players embark on an 18 month journey to discover that they are chasing mere gossip?

You're Booked

An ancient book has come into the players' possession. It's written in a language they have never seen before, but the marginal notes are in scholarly Latin. These suggest that it contains some precious magical secrets.

The only speakers of the lost tongue are a monastic order on a far away island – the last remnant of a long dead empire. The players set out to find the monks, in the hope of persuading them to translate the tome, or even to teach them their lost language. However, the book turns out to contain apocryphal chapters of the monks' Holy Book – chapters which they are sworn to destroy.

"If no waiting highwaymen waylay your servant, there is a fairly good chance that your message will get to the other end. Eventually."

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

It is said that, in the closing weeks of the civil war, a group of Cromwell's men rode into a West Country village. They challenged the first farmer they found with the words, 'Be you for King or for Parliament?' 'Oh,' the man replied. 'Have those two fallen out?'

They also weren't averse to copying out romances and adventure stories, provided these had an edifying point. (It may be that the Holy Grail was worked into the story of King Arthur to give a religious point to all those yarns about very irreligious knights.) A particular scribe might decide to add a love poem, a funny story or perhaps a dirty joke in a spare inch in the margin of a serious book. An author could never be completely sure that a scribe, or a succession of scribes, would copy his words accurately. At the end of his enormous poem, *Troilus and Cressida*, Geoffrey Chaucer begs the scribes to only copy what he actually wrote.

If you could write, and find a scrap of paper, there was nothing to stop you writing a letter. But there were no neat post-boxes or postal services. You put a seal on it, you found a traveller or a pilgrim going in roughly the right direction, you handed him the letter and a couple of silver coins, and asked him to pass it on. Maybe it would get to its destination, maybe not.

Far, Far Away

In such a world, a king or an emperor can only maintain power if he can find a way of getting messages from his seat of government out to the provinces quickly. Otherwise, there will be rebellions – local lords running things their way without reference to his edicts – and he won't even know it's happening until it's too late. Why do you think the Romans built straight roads wherever they went?

In an emergency bonfires and beacons could be used to send a message across the country in the space of a single night. Light a big fire on one hill, and when the people on the next hill see it, they'll light one too, and so on, until the message reaches the capital. This is all very well provided you have a simple message to send, for example 'The Spanish Armada is coming!'

If you are prepared to send a relatively simple message along an established route, you could always try sending a carrier pigeon. However, these don't seem to have been very widely used for official messages in the Middle Ages. Perhaps it was just too unreliable. One arrow in the wrong place, one unfortunate encounter with a bird of prey, and your chain of communication was broken.

No, your best bet is still runners or relays of horses. Give your message, for example 'The king is dead', to a trusted servant, and send him on a fast horse. Pass it on to a waiting ride, a few hundred miles away. And so on, at maximum speed, across land. And if no waiting highwaymen waylay your servant, and the horse doesn't lose a shoe, or get stuck in the mud, then there is a fairly good chance that your message will get to the other end. Eventually.

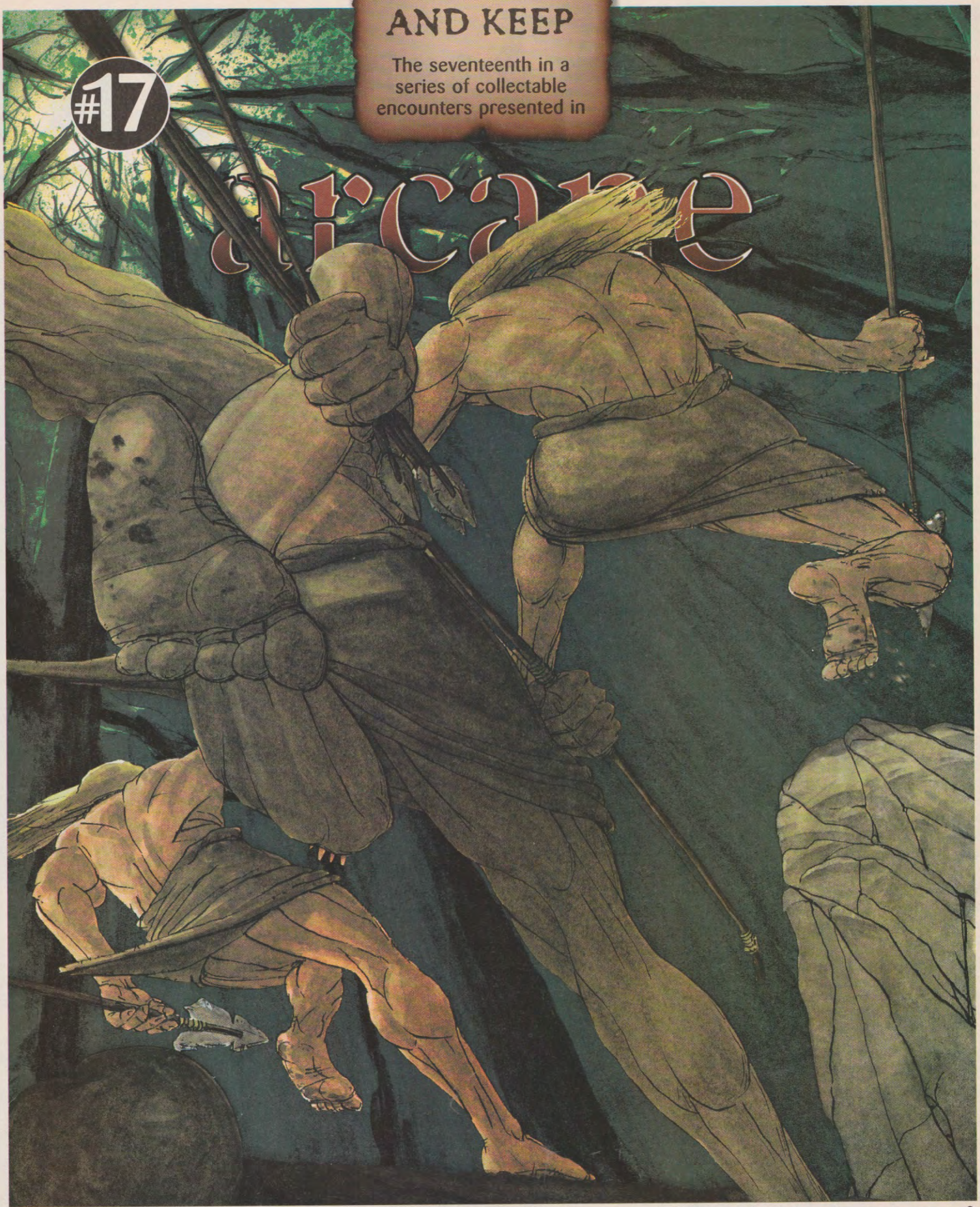
Or, if that doesn't work, you can always wait 500 years for telephones to be invented.

PULL OUT AND KEEP

The seventeenth in a series of collectable encounters presented in

#17

Arcane



Legend has it that the ancient library on the planet of Idoon holds the secret of eternal life. But the primitive tribesmen who stand guard outside its closed doors are prepared to defend it to the death.

by Jo Walton

There was a strange gleam in Claris Marjuksen's eyes as she looked up from the flickering screens.

"She was right. The building's there, intact, to my scan. Down there on that primitive mudball lies the answer to all our dreams. And who knows what else might be in that library? Lost knowledge of the ancients, alien books containing who knows what, locations of lost planets, there could be anything. The Barrett family were undoubtedly great collectors, everyone knows it."

Piers was leaning lazily on a console, a drink bulb in his hand. He looked as suave and as elegant as when they set off from civilisation, Claris noted, not a hair was out of place. "I do hope you're right, sweet sister. Because we need something to restore our failing fortunes, and it does look rather as if this is the last chance for you and me and this bucket of rust that can barely reach c any more." He raised an eyebrow and interrupted as Claris drew an angry breath. "I know, I know, I shouldn't talk about the Gwendolen like that. But you have to admit she's definitely due for a refit."

Claris nodded reluctantly. "But I am right. This time, our fortune really is made. We're here first, and there's nobody to stop us. Think of it, Piers, eternal youth." There was an avaricious gleam in their eyes as Claris turned to program the Gwendolen to land.

Far below them on the planet the ancient library sat, inviolate on its island. All around it, the primitives were moving.

Chief Maardin shifted his spear to his left hand and took an apple from the nearest tree. He took a bite and scrutinised the seeds visible in the opening.

"Are omens bad, father?" Maardin jumped to see his daughter, Linar, standing at his side. She had approached quite noiselessly.

"I do not think there will be an attack today." He took another pensive bite of the apple. "But there is great change coming, and strangers-from-beyond-the-sky." Linar sighed and tossed back her long plait of golden hair.

"That means trouble, father." Maardin caught sight of movement in the bushes on the far side of the stream. He and Linar both tightened their grips on their spears and moved to positions of alertness. Then they relaxed, recognising one of the tribe's young hunters.

"The omens do not say if it is good or bad, whether these strangers will succeed in opening what we have guarded for so long or not. They just tell me that there will be great change." Maardin sighed, and tossed the apple core into the water.

The Anci

This month we peruse the shelves of the Barrett library

IDOON

General: Idoon is an inhabitable and inhabited planet, fourth out from its G7 sun. It is of typical Earth-like size and has a predictable Nitrogen/Oxygen atmosphere. Idoon has three continents: Idoon, Tharzee and Siff. All are inhabited by humans living at a primitive level of technology. It was rediscovered by civilisation only in this last generation. It had been lost for many years, although exactly how many years is not known.

History: The origin and previous identification of the planet is not established. The most likely conjecture is that of Mahmud Vink of the university of New Kalahari, who believes (based on linguistic evidence among the natives) that the planet was settled by last-generation ships and was previously unknown. There are, however, alternative theories. Celia Westfalen of the university of Sintra has argued persuasively that the planet was the one formerly known as Iduna, supposedly the home of the famous Barrett family. Persistent rumours linking the Barretts to immortality serums and the like make this larger than life identification unlikely, despite the coincidence of names.

Academic controversy continues to rage on this subject. The curious reader is recommended to peruse Vink and Westfalen's works and the bibliographies thereof. (This will include *A Linguistic Analysis of the Origin of the Natives of Idoon*, M Vink, New Kalahari Press; *Under the Apple Trees: The Discovery of the Barretts of Iduna*, C Westfalen, U of Sintra Press; *Speculative Nonsense: Flukes, the Barretts and Idoon*, M Vink, New Kalahari Press; *From Towering Smoke that Fire Can Never Burn: Linguistics, Barretts and Iduna*, C Westfalen, U of Sintra Press.)

Flora and Fauna: Most fauna is imported Terran. Cultivated floras include varieties of wheat and Terran root plants. The main vegetation throughout the planet's temperate zone is the Idoon apple tree, which is largely exploited by the natives. The local fauna and flora has not been extensively catalogued or studied beyond standard first contact safety procedures.

Capital: Idoonsport, on the continent of Idoon. This is an ugly, modern town of some million inhabitants, many employed in the distilleries and living in shantytowns. There is a spaceport, some administrative offices, hotels and general facilities for off-world travellers. The off-world population of Idoon is concentrated in Idoonsport and the immediately surrounding areas, and is estimated to be less than 6,000 in all.

Other Towns: None. The population (numbers unknown) lives in scattered settlements under the apple trees. The few villages discovered so far have a population of over 2,000 in total.

Industry: Most of the indigenous inhabitants are employed in farming. Most of those employed in industry work in the processing of the native Idoon apples for export. There is also some textile manufacture.

Exports: Idoon exports fine apple brandy for the luxury export markets of civilised planets, where it finds a good price. There are no other major exports.

Inhabitants: The inhabitants are peace-loving bucolic farmers who live at a very low-tech level, analogous to that of Earth in about 1000.

Transport: Freighters call at Idoonsport regularly to pick up brandy for export, deliver luxuries to off-worlders on-planet and to deliver the occasional visitor. There is a freighter visit every few months. On-planet transport is by heli or crawler in the Idoonsport area, by feet or animal power elsewhere.

Other sites of note: None.

From: General Encyclopedia of Inhabited Planets

The Library

The Barrett Library on the continent of Siff is a venerable institution, founded a long time ago when civilisation in the galaxy was at a higher level. It is, as yet, undiscovered by civilisation since its loss many years ago. It lies in a wooded area on the third and least inhabited continent of the planet. It is situated on an island in a lake and, although it is useless to the native inhabitants, it has several times been the cause of territorial wars because holding Lieree Island, as it is known, is a great mark of status among the clans of Idoon. The library has been undisturbed for some considerable time. It contains many irreplaceable treasures.

It is a rectangular building made mostly of one-way smoked bulletproof glass. This glass resists any impact or attempt to break it. It is not a true glass, but a tough carbon fibre which is highly flammable – if exposed to a naked flame for a few minutes it will begin to burn at an extremely high temperature, destroying itself and all the contents of the library. This is the reason for the taboo on the use of fire on the island.

Protections of the Library

The library is protected quite effectively from exploitation on several different levels.

The territory around the island belongs to several different warring tribes of apple-eaters. There may at any given time be a war between the tribes over possession of the library. This will naturally not bother anyone landing a spaceship or flying direct to the island. However, it may on occasion be a

ent Library

in an attempt to discover the secrets therein.

severe hindrance to anyone coming towards the island overland.

Swans nest all around the verge of the island; they are reluctantly tolerant of the locals, but not tolerant at all of strangers. (Swans are extremely noisy, and a wing-buffet from one can break an unprotected human arm or a leg.)

The human inhabitants of Lieree Island speak a primitive and slurred form of a commonly understood language. They are fiercely protective of the treasure the library represents, and will attempt to defend it with their spears and bows. They are neither peace-loving nor bucolic, though some of the tribes closer to Idoonsport may well seem like that to anthropologists. They have no idea what is inside the building, which none of them have ever entered. They do know that it is valuable and they are reluctant to allow anyone to approach it. It is, of course, possible for anyone at a higher tech level to simply kill them all. However, if this is discovered it will cause a great scandal and murder trials – it may even be considered an atrocity or war crime if done entirely without provocation and in front of witnesses. It should be possible to negotiate with the locals – they are neither stupid nor unreasonable, just protective. The library has a religious significance to them, and anyone who wishes to be allowed inside must demonstrate their worthiness.

The library has an airlock which is opened by a code. This has always served to keep the primitives out and cannot be hacked into in any circumstances (see the section on computers on page 45). It is a solid state glass computer, and has a primitive keypad which allows anyone who types in 'Open Sesame' to enter. The lock or the door can be forced using high technology tools, but this should take more than a day to accomplish with any grace at all. There is some considerable chance of setting the library on fire and hence destroying it if this is attempted, especially if it is attempted in a hurry.

Should the library be destroyed, all the local tribes will be infuriated – they will rise up and attempt to kill the perpetrators. They will stop at nothing to do this, throwing

Illustration © arcane by Simon Gurr

The System

You'll notice that, even though we present character descriptions for the people involved with the Library, we don't provide you with any stats. That's a deliberate decision – you're supposed to be able to use this encounter with all manner of campaigns, and there's no way we could provide stats for all of them. Just make up the stats for these characters yourself, using the descriptions as a starting point. Same goes for other 'system' details.

The Apple-eaters

The apple-eaters tend to be blond and fair skinned, although some of them are red-haired. There are also very occasional people with pale brown hair, who are considered to be heartbreakingly beautiful, probably mystically chosen and in any case special. They are tattooed with an apple as well as their usual symbol. The apple-eaters also tend to be attractive and healthy. They wear sarongs wrapped around themselves, made from woven flax. Their main crops are wheat, root vegetables and flax, and they also eat fish and game birds. However, the majority of their diet consists of the golden-skinned apples which grow wild almost everywhere. They are warlike and fight often, using spears and bows. The apple-eaters scrupulously observe all their superstitions and taboos, including the 'no fire on Lieree Island' one. If strangers break a taboo without permission they are given a friendly warning. The second time they break it they are killed. Taboos include eating swan, marrying your brother's wife and picking apples without intending to eat them. They all have a tattoo on their pectoral muscle, one of six traditional tattoos which are mostly recognisable ancient Earth icons.

Tribes tend to consist of a large number of adults, few children and almost no old people, at most one or two. This should lead anyone with any anthropological knowledge at all to ask questions about social structures which will probably lead to the wrong conclusions (see the scenario on page 46).

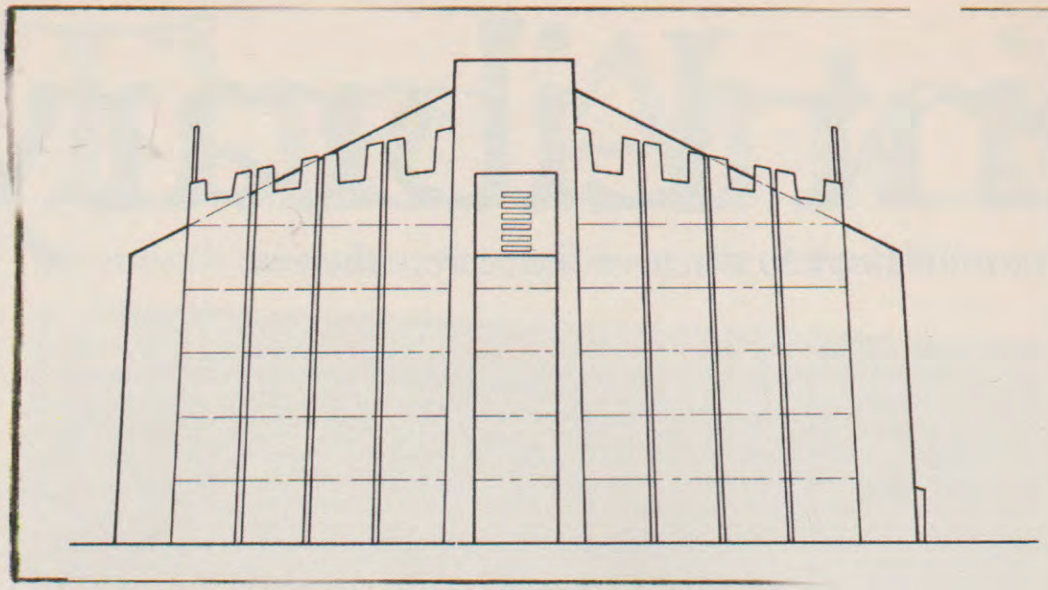
Quote: "We will defend our apple trees from the dangers of fire."

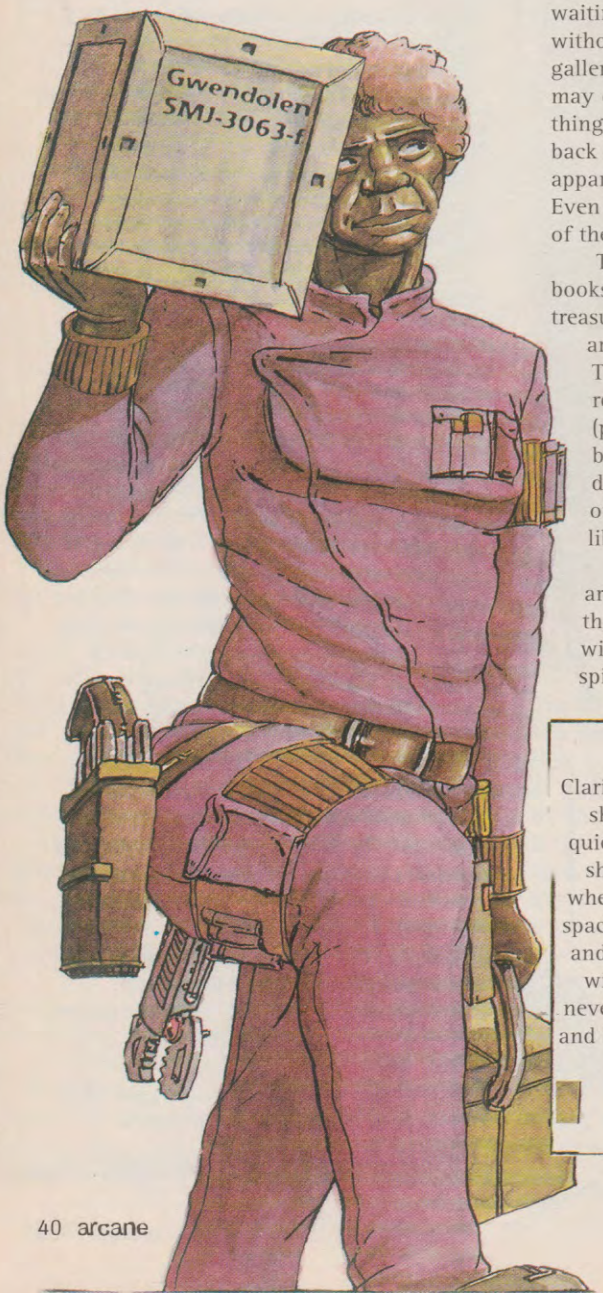
themselves in front of lasers, tying themselves to spaceships and so on. If the library goes up in flames it will be very difficult for anyone to leave. They may also be in trouble with their patrons when they get back. The glass spindles will not be much damaged by fire, but everything else will be completely destroyed.

Inside the Library

Most of the contents of the library are useless glass spindles. A few of these may also be discovered outside the library being worn by the natives as jewellery – these will be broken and hardly recognisable as what they are, even if an observer knows what spindles look like. (Nobody but an expert in the history of computing or the history of technology should have any chance of knowing what these objects are.)

The room to the left of the entrance is full of priceless art treasures, ancient originals from Earth and Alpha Centauri, original paintings by such giants as Rembrandt, Whelan and Skud'ree, sculptures by Michaelangelo, Rodin and Ford. Most, but not all, of these are genuine. None of them are labelled. These are actually works waiting to be catalogued and are stored here without organisation. The Barretts had an art gallery on another planet (whose location may or may not be discoverable) and these things were here in transit. If they appear back in civilisation it will quickly become apparent which are real and which are fakes. Even the fakes will be very valuable because of their unusual history.





The room to the right contains paper books which may include any priceless treasures required, or may be useless. They are in good condition, sealed into casks. This is where the one broken, spindle-reading computer is found, along with (paper) evidence that the books were all being transferred to spindle and destroyed afterwards. This should be the only accessible information in the library, at least at first...

The main portion of the library is arranged like a glass cathedral to books – the walls up to the ceilings are covered with glass shelves containing glass spindles. The shelves are labelled alphabetically but not by subject, and there is no indication of whether the alphabetical labelling is by author, title, classification or any other system.

On the (glass) floor is a huge infinity symbol which glints in many colours.

Kicksteps

There are a number of kicksteps around the library. These are part of the filing system. They were used instead of labelling the shelves in detail or employing librarians. They are programmed with the location of every item in the library. If anyone asks them for anything by catalogue number, author and title or subject, the kickstep will whirr off on its castors and stop in front of the correct shelf, allowing the library user to stand or sit on it to reach the correct spindle. It can extend high enough to reach the top shelves. They cannot talk, but respond to spoken commands. If anyone mentions a catalogue number, or a book by author and title, in front of them they will move off, whether the comment was addressed to them or not. This was a useful system once. It is only useless now because the spindles themselves are useless. If anyone opens a kickstep to see how it works they will

Claris Marjuksen

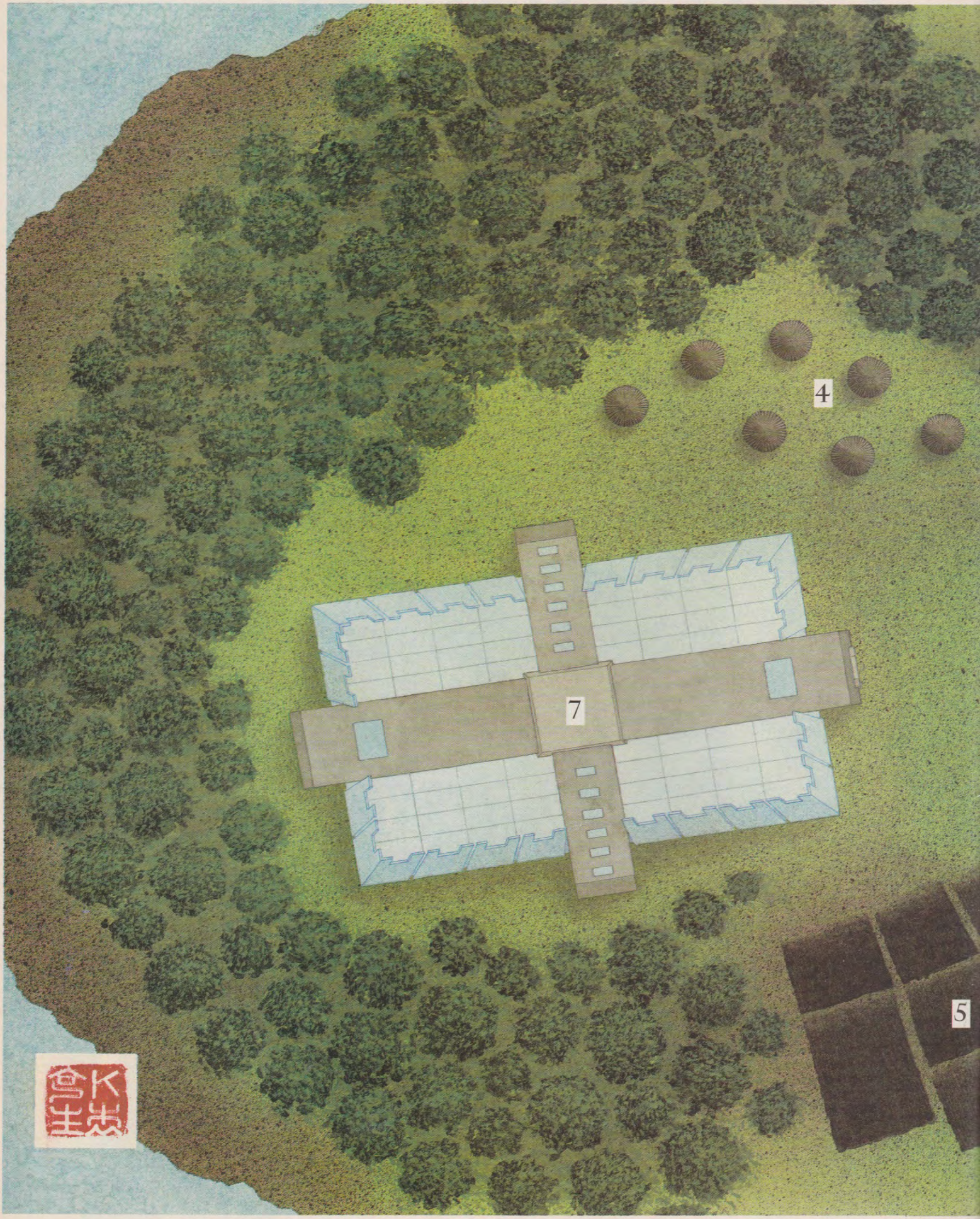
Claris is a plain-faced woman of 42. Physically strong and competent with modern weapons, she is always suitably armed, and can draw and fire rapidly as required. Intelligent and quick-thinking, she is a starship pilot and navigator. Her younger brother is Piers, to whom she is completely loyal and devoted. Their parents were killed by space-pirates long ago when Claris was 12 and Piers was eight, and they have been scraping a precarious living in space ever since. Claris has never had any other close friends or potential romantic interests, and regards herself as less important than her brother. Sometimes they have lived on Piers' wits, and sometimes on Claris' skills. She has worked as a pilot on commercial lines, but never for long because Piers always does something to get them sacked. Claris has dark skin and hair, and tends to wear practical space gear such as boiler suits. Claris and Piers are very obviously brother and sister – she would do anything to protect him.

Quote: "Yes, Piers. This is our big chance."

The Library

the gaming magazine
arcane
ENCOUNTER!
FREE MONTHLY PULL-OUT

1. Airlock entrance
2. Hallway
3. Book room
4. Antique spindle computer
5. Art treasury
6. Main room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the gaming magazine
arcane
ENCOUNTER!
FREE MONTHLY PULL-OUT

The Island

1. Landing stages
2. Cider press
3. Inn
4. Huts
5. Fields
6. The church
7. The Barrett Library

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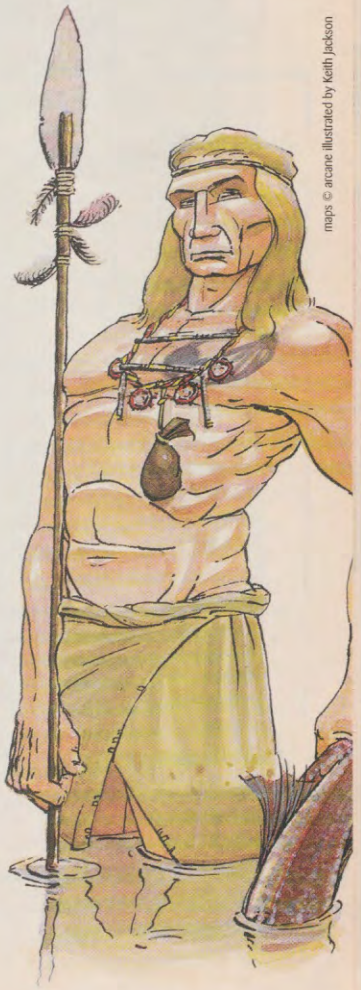
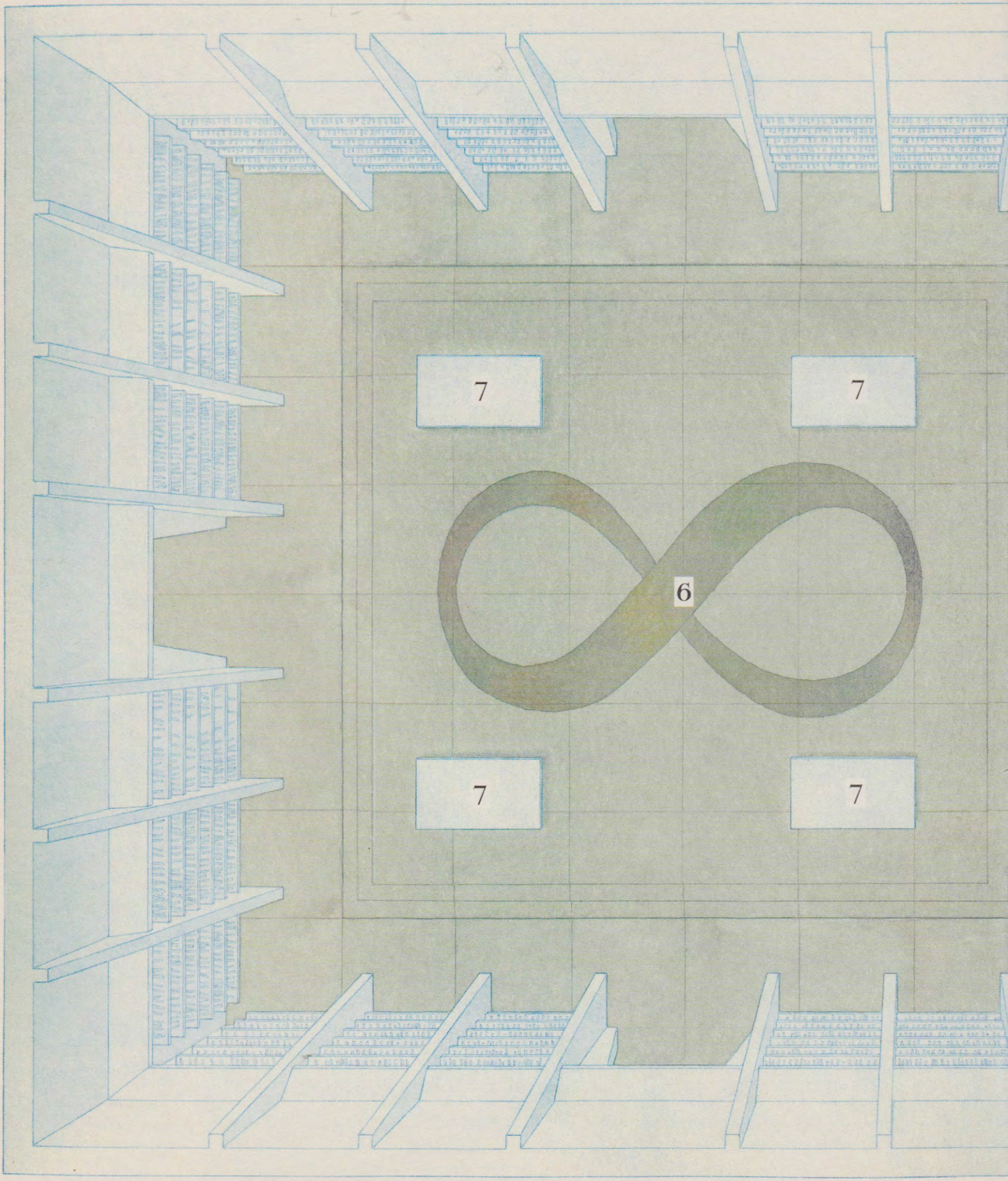


maps © arcane illustrated by Keith Jackson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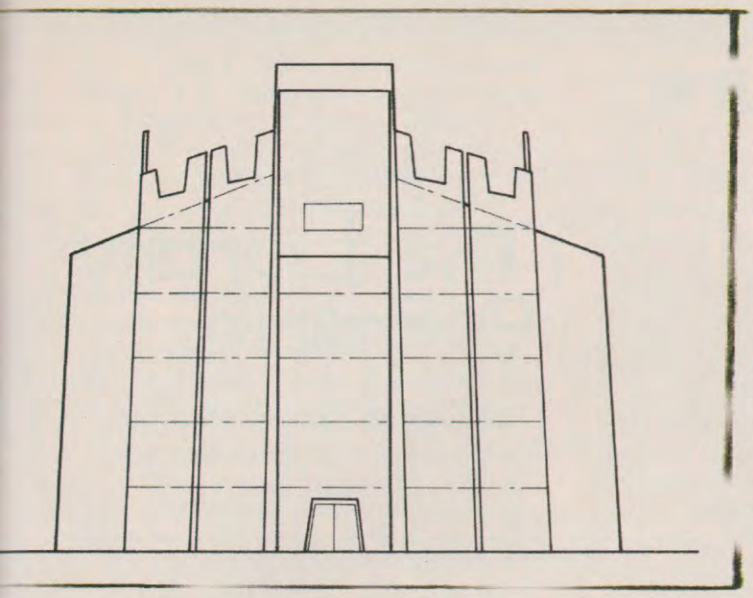


discover that they have a primitive solid state version of the glass computers inside them, and they are not compatible with the spindles in the library. If given two orders, the kickstep will obey the most recent.

Computers

The computers of the library are utterly incompatible with anything the PCs or anyone alive can possibly find. There should be no way anyone can use them, or the banks and banks of computer spindles which are part of the library, without reinventing a whole technology. This is probably possible, but will take years and may well destroy some of the precious spindles in the experimental process.

This was an idiosyncratic system at the time the Barretts bought it up cheap, but it has been improved and refined. Even those familiar with ancient computer technology are puzzled by it. Information is stored on glass-spiked spindles which are inserted into glass cylinders, and lasers then read the information. These spindles do not appear at first to be information storage, but rather jewellery. They are fragile, and made of true glass, unlike the outer walls of the library. There is only one old reader which cannot easily be made to work – it was left because it was broken. The reason this technology was never popular was that although the spindles could store information so well for so long, the readers were glitchy and sensitive and broke easily. Some say that the Barrett family left to find new readers and are eternally questing across the galaxy for spare parts.

The Barretts

For a family who have been gone from the planet for at least 2,000 years, the Barretts are still very influential. In the wider galaxy they are a myth, a family who left Earth in a spaceship and visited many places. There are rumours that they had some form of immortality, and the length of their lives does seem longer than is plausible without some such explanation. A bunch of eccentrics, they were avid seekers of knowledge and manic collectors. They were fascinated by aliens, and made first contact more times than any other group. The original Barretts consisted of six people: a politician, two artists, a socialite, a museum curator and a fighter pilot. They all changed their name to Barrett when they married and left Earth. At least four children were born in space and some accounts claim that the Barretts were a multi-generation family, not a long-lived one. Their disappearance remains a mystery, although it seems probable that they were unable to find their way back while exploring yet another star system.

Doctor Amaryllis Mbarag

Amaryllis is an anthropologist, studying the tribes of the interior of Siff. She is funded by the powerful and influential university of New Kalahari, which will investigate if her reports stop arriving. This is her first individual project after her thesis, and she is determined to do it right. Amaryllis is young, pretty and ferociously intelligent. She has brown skin and dark hair, and wears a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. These are entirely an anachronistic affectation – she has had corrective surgery for her vision like everyone else in the galaxy, and the glass is plain. She loves to swim and exercise, and is extremely fit and healthy. She wears primitive sarongs, like the natives, but it is not possible for her to appear to be one of them. Amaryllis gets on with them extremely well with the natives. This may be because of the trinkets and medicines she hands out, or it may be by sheer force of will. They have a great deal of respect for her. In addition, she knows the language of the apple-eaters well, and is informed about their customs. If the party members trek across land towards the library they will encounter her on the way. She knows nothing about the library, though she has heard about the tradition of wars over the possession of Lieree Island. She will accompany the party, or the Marjuksens, whoever she encounters first, not as an interpreter but to ensure that they do no damage to the native culture. If they fly in direct, some of the natives will summon her and she will arrive shortly. She has the most up-to-date computer and communication equipment. She has studied under Dr Mahmud Vink and believes in his theories of the naming and founding of Idoon, at least until she has contradictory evidence. She has a visa permitting her to be on the planet, and is going to be picked up by flier from Idoonsport at a certain time and place when her work is finished

Quotes: "I don't care about the library, I don't care about its value, what I care about is that the modern-day Idoonan culture should not be disturbed."
"If you do that, I shall make sure you can never hold your head up anywhere in civilisation ever again."

Now that's MAGIC

Whoever said 'it's only a game' was seriously underestimating the competitive pull of tournament Magic. And if, like **Cid**, *you can't wait for the next meeting, why not roll up your sleeves and organise your own?*

WHO IS CID?

My real name is John Milner. I am 28 years old, married with one daughter. In the real world I am an Information Analyst. I have been playing Magic since the end of Legends, and organise The Gathering type II tournament. My favourite colour in Magic is Red and my favourite card is the Cyclopean Mummy which I am collecting in all its printings.

There is little doubt in my mind that while Magic is one of the best and most popular collectable card games on the market today, it really comes into its own in a competitive tournament or league environment. I like nothing better than to sit down on a Sunday evening with my friends for a quick multi-player game but, when I'm sat across the table from a stranger, both of us with finely-tuned competitive decks, those friendly gatherings with monstrous 200-card decks towering over the table fade into insignificance.

So, with competitive Magic being so much fun, how do you go about setting up a small league or tournament?

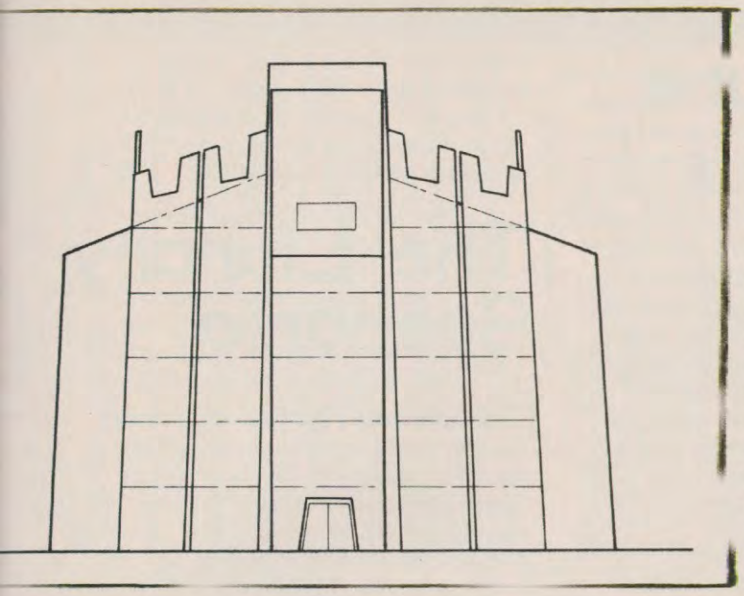
Tournament or League

These are the two main types of competitive event. A league is often run over several weeks with each person playing every other player. While leagues have the advantage of being easier to run on an organisational basis, requiring smaller and often easier-to-find venues, they have problems when you are trying to get players together for a match. Another problem is what to do if players don't play a match by the set deadline; most groups either void the match or declare it a draw.

Tournaments on the other hand are much larger affairs, with all the players gathering for a day's Magic to find out who is the best. You don't have the problem of getting players together, but

For a big tournament you'll need to hire a local hall or a hotel function room.

"I'll see you for £50." - Not a funny joke (no, really) thanks to UK laws.



discover that they have a primitive solid state version of the glass computers inside them, and they are not compatible with the spindles in the library. If given two orders, the kickstep will obey the most recent.

Computers

The computers of the library are utterly incompatible with anything the PCs or anyone alive can possibly find. There should be no way anyone can use them, or the banks and banks of computer spindles which are part of the library, without reinventing a whole technology. This is probably possible, but will take years and may well destroy some of the precious spindles in the experimental process.

This was an idiosyncratic system at the time the Barretts bought it up cheap, but it has been improved and refined. Even those familiar with ancient computer technology are puzzled by it. Information is stored on glass-spiked spindles which are inserted into glass cylinders, and lasers then read the information. These spindles do not appear at first to be information storage, but rather jewellery. They are fragile, and made of true glass, unlike the outer walls of the library. There is only one old reader which cannot easily be made to work – it was left because it was broken. The reason this technology was never popular was that although the spindles could store information so well for so long, the readers were glitchy and sensitive and broke easily. Some say that the Barrett family left to find new readers and are eternally questing across the galaxy for spare parts.

The Barretts

For a family who have been gone from the planet for at least 2,000 years, the Barretts are still very influential. In the wider galaxy they are a myth, a family who left Earth in a spaceship and visited many places. There are rumours that they had some form of immortality, and the length of their lives does seem longer than is plausible without some such explanation. A bunch of eccentrics, they were avid seekers of knowledge and manic collectors. They were fascinated by aliens, and made first contact more times than any other group. The original Barretts consisted of six people: a politician, two artists, a socialite, a museum curator and a fighter pilot. They all changed their name to Barrett when they married and left Earth. At least four children were born in space and some accounts claim that the Barretts were a multi-generation family, not a long-lived one. Their disappearance remains a mystery, although it seems probable that they were unable to find their way back while exploring yet another star system.

Doctor Amaryllis Mbarag

Amaryllis is an anthropologist, studying the tribes of the interior of Siff. She is funded by the powerful and influential university of New Kalahari, which will investigate if her reports stop arriving. This is her first individual project after her thesis, and she is determined to do it right. Amaryllis is young, pretty and ferociously intelligent. She has brown skin and dark hair, and wears a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. These are entirely an anachronistic affectation – she has had corrective surgery for her vision like everyone else in the galaxy, and the glass is plain. She loves to swim and exercise, and is extremely fit and healthy. She wears primitive sarongs, like the natives, but it is not possible for her to appear to be one of them. Amaryllis gets on with them extremely well with the natives. This may be because of the trinkets and medicines she hands out, or it may be by sheer force of will. They have a great deal of respect for her. In addition, she knows the language of the apple-eaters well, and is informed about their customs. If the party members trek across land towards the library they will encounter her on the way. She knows nothing about the library, though she has heard about the tradition of wars over the possession of Lieree Island. She will accompany the party, or the Marjuksens, whoever she encounters first, not as an interpreter but to ensure that they do no damage to the native culture. If they fly in direct, some of the natives will summon her and she will arrive shortly. She has the most up-to-date computer and communication equipment. She has studied under Dr Mahmud Vink and believes in his theories of the naming and founding of Idoon, at least until she has contradictory evidence. She has a visa permitting her to be on the planet, and is going to be picked up by flier from Idoonsport at a certain time and place when her work is finished

Quotes: "I don't care about the library, I don't care about its value, what I care about is that the modern-day Idoonan culture should not be disturbed."
"If you do that, I shall make sure you can never hold your head up anywhere in civilisation ever again."

Piers Marjuksen

Piers is still handsome and elegant at 38, but he is no longer the young man who charmed a spaceship out of a millionaire lover at 18. He always looks debonair and, like his sister, has dark skin and hair. He wears fashionable clothes and does not like to get them dirty or rumpled. Piers is still very attractive, especially when he smiles. He has a glib tongue and a way of getting people to do what he wants, including getting others to talk about themselves, and then manipulating them using this information. He is not strong or fit, and relies on his sister much more that he would like people to know. (He is reluctant to admit this even to himself.) Despite carrying a small gun that he is not afraid to use, Piers is much more likely to try to charm or intimidate anyone than shoot them. He has been seeking the secret of eternal youth for years, since he got his first wrinkle, and this is what drives him, more than the quest for riches. For the chance of this he will risk everything, even his sister and his ship Gwendolen. He says everything in a slow drawl.

Quote: "How unexpectedly delightful to meet other civilised people here."

Adventure Seeds

Crash landing

The PCs are the first people to accidentally discover Idoon. They have to make their way overland to the fabled library, in the hope of learning how to use the technology to read the spindles to repair their ship and leave. The natives will tell them stories about the library which is their only chance. They may be rescued or find the information they need, or they might meet the Marjuksens.

Massacre

The party members are in Idoonsport for a brandy festival, or other reason, where they are employed by the council (effectively the ruling body of the planet) to investigate a massacre on Siff where the natives apparently have modern weapons. It emerges that an unscrupulous corporation has discovered and is exploiting the library for its own gain, and is arming the natives to protect it for them.

Information

The information in the library (especially on the spindles) can be literally anything. It can be used to direct a party to other places on Idoon, or to coordinates elsewhere in the galaxy. The spindles themselves can be useful later – if the PCs take some, even though they cannot read them, they may later find a reader (or reinvent the technology) and get the information. Or they may turn out to be useless guides to the Taj Mahal and a list of Cypriot chip shops in Reading. Dictionaries of alien languages are a priceless resource and the Barretts specialised in compiling them. This can be a hook for a much later adventure when the party meets a hitherto unknown race whose dictionary they have. They may even rediscover a Barrett colony. Beware of the temptation to make the books and spindles too useful, though - the amount of useful data is huge, but the amount of useless data is infinite.

Immortality

The library has not been discovered, but the immortality drug found in the apples is being marketed across the galaxy. After about a century, side effects become clear – about a quarter of the people who take it go mad after prolonged use. The PCs are sent to Idoon to investigate why the natives don't. They travel to the library on a sacred quest, helped by the natives, to discover the truth. There is, of course, nothing in the library on the subject, and, if asked, the natives will explain that about a quarter of their population goes mad anyway – it is a fact of life that didn't seem to require a mention. "So much for 'it has been extensively tested on human volunteer populations'."

The Library Scenario

The Golden Apples of Idoon

The PCs should arrive to attempt to exploit the library, either hired by an off-planet organisation or on their own initiative. The organisation can be a corporation, university, planetary government or perhaps an individual patron. The university of Sintra and Professor Celia Westfalen would make a good patron for this because they have a vested interest in proving that the library exists. This would also provide a little conflict with Amaryllis when they meet her. If they are employed by a corporation, the corporation's aim will be profit, if a university the aim will be knowledge, if a government, it will undoubtedly be power. An individual can have any of these motivations, or any other logical or illogical reason for sending a party of adventurers to another planet to look for a library that may not even be there.

If they are not acting independently they should have to keep records and make reports for later delivery. They will probably be on a salary plus bonus and everything they find will belong to their employer, who is paying their (not inconsiderable) expenses. If they destroy the library when they have a patron they will definitely be in trouble on their return.

The scenario works with the PCs having any level of technology. The Marjuksens should have about the same, and Amaryllis should have the same level but probably better quality. The Barretts had different technology, better in some ways and worse in others. This scenario assumes they have a spaceship, or arrive on Siff by spaceship in any case. None of the problems will yield easily to massive applications of tech, and high-tech weapons will mostly get them into trouble. It is best if nobody is in constant communication with either Idoonsport or off-planet sources, but if the PCs have to be, then everyone else will be too.

Claris and Piers Marjuksen are adventurers looking for the secret of life, and also wishing to become rich. They arrive in orbit around Idoon and discover the library at about the same time the party do. Despite being friendly at first, they are unscrupulous and will try to trick the party out of

whatever is discovered. What's more, this should be fairly convincing – after all, there is no reason for anyone to distrust them, although it should be clear that Claris is rather sullen and Piers is spoilt.

If the PCs are able, or choose, to fly straight to Lieree Island, the Marjuksens will do the same. If not, they will travel overland. If they do this, the two groups should encounter each other and Doctor Mbarag before they reach the island. They will then arrive on the island together. It would be better if they do travel overland for at least a day. There are many reasons why the spaceship should not be landed on Lieree Island – it is very small and the library is highly flammable. There are several good landing sites only a day or so's trek through the orchards to the island.

The two groups will be in constant competition to win over the natives and exploit the library. The anthropologist is an influential neutral whose presence should keep everything from descending into immediate violence.

Piers will try to use charm to get what he wants out of the natives, Amaryllis and the PCs, but will actually despise them. Claris Marjuksen will be much more honest about her genuine dislike for everyone but Piers. Amaryllis will spend a lot of time shouting at everyone (except the natives) about the natives' rights.

Shortly after they arrive on the island, and possibly when they are negotiating with the natives, there will be an attack by another tribe. If they fight beside the natives Chief Maardin will allow them access to the library. If they use high-tech weapons to do so, Amaryllis will report them for committing an atrocity, unless it was necessary to save their lives. This should result in a trial when they return to civilisation unless they can convince Amaryllis to destroy the evidence, which won't be easy.

Piers will try to persuade Chief Maardin that he alone is chosen by the gods to enter the library. He is very likely to be successful at this if he's given a chance to get away with it. If the PCs have been annoying him, Piers will tell Maardin that they are demons. They may find themselves with spears at their throats at midnight, and be required to do some fast talking to extricate themselves. In this situation Amaryllis can be counted on to support them. Piers has enough sense not to try to say she is a demon no matter what, because she is popular with the natives.

Once they get inside the library, the groups will have different objectives. Claris will attempt to mend the spindle-reader, Piers is sure to read the books and Amaryllis will be interested in cataloguing the art treasures.

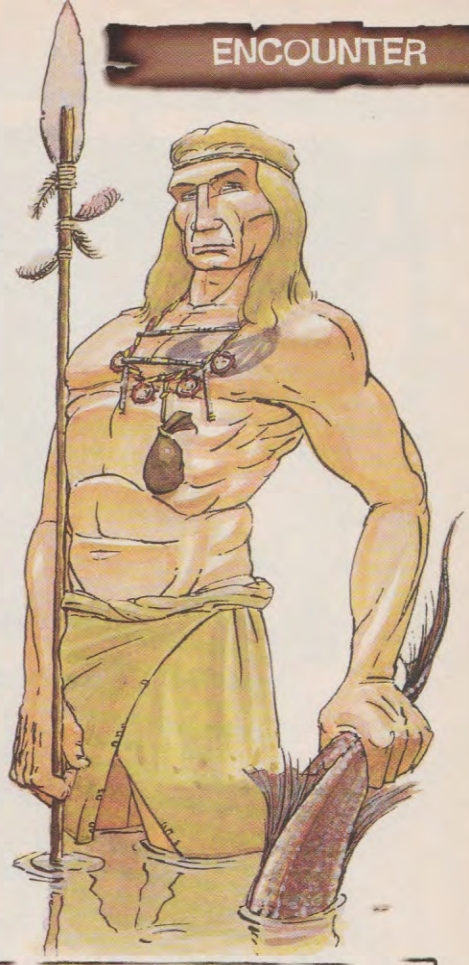
What the PCs want to do at this point will be up to them. The library can contain anything the referee desires, or nothing of importance if that works better. It might have some ancient treasure the party wants, or information contained either in a book or on a spindle. This may be about something of galaxy-wide importance – a better FTL drive, alien secrets, new computer tech or bio-tech – or of more limited scope – location of settled then but now unknown planets, information about new alien races and so on. The Marjuksens will suggest an equitable arrangement whereby each group gets half of the treasure – or a third with Amaryllis getting a third for the university of New Kalahari or herself if she prefers (she will accept it only in trust for the natives). This will lead to wrangles about who gets exactly what and much squabbling, which, it may be noted, the Marjuksens give in to slightly more easily than might be expected. This is because they are planning to double-cross everyone, pull weapons and take everything when it has been sorted and organised. How they do this will depend on exactly what they have with them – if Gwendolen is on the ground then they will use her guns, otherwise they will use hand guns, manipulating everyone else into a position of being unarmed.

When they are about to leave the natives organise a feast, at which everyone should wear native dress and be unarmed. At the feast Piers will pull a gun, or announce that the guns of his ship are live and covering everyone, and attempt to walk off with everything. If he and Claris carry out this action, their bones may be found in the forest sometime later, along with the stolen treasure. Or they may escape and live to fight another day, though the PCs should never trust them again.

Whatever happens with this ultimatum, and in the library, the secret of life is nowhere to be found. Little known to the party or the Marjuksens, Amaryllis already knows it, though she has no intention of telling them. The despised primitives of Idoon regularly live to be 400 years old in good health. She assumes it is a genetic mutation and will publish the fact when she returns home. In fact she is wrong – analysis of the golden apples of Idoon shows that if they form upwards of 50 percent of the diet they will retard ageing, and the universe will sooner or later have another rejuvenation drug from Idoon, even if it didn't come out of the library.

Suggestions for Inspiring Reading

You might like to take a look at the following books... Lloyd Biggle Jr: *Monument;* Marjorie Bradley Kellogg: *The Wave and the Flame* and *Reign of Fire;* Nicola Griffith: *Ammonite;* Jerry Pournelle King: *David's Spaceship;* H Beam Piper: *Cosmic Computer, Federation, Empire.*



Chief Maardin

Maardin is the chief of the apple-eaters who currently control Lieree Island. Like almost all the primitives of Idoon, he has fair skin, blue eyes and blonde hair. In common with the other natives he bears one traditional tattoo on his pectoral muscle. In his case it is recognisably the Coca-Cola logo. He is strong and tall, and has excellent teeth. He speaks no languages but his own, which is understandable if spoken slowly, and will vigorously enforce all the traditions of the apple-eaters, most especially that there should be no fire on Lieree Island. He fights with a spear and the whole community will support him if he declares that they should fight. Chief Maardin firmly believes he can tell the future from the patterns of apple-seeds found in the apples he eats. This sometimes proves to have an uncanny accuracy.

Quotes: "You say you are looking for knowledge. I am looking after the sacred trust of my people."
"I may be a savage. That doesn't mean I'm stupid."

Next month

In next month's Encounter we hitch a ride on an early 20th century airship. **arcane** 18 is out on Thursday 27th March.

Now that's MAGIC

Whoever said 'it's only a game' was seriously underestimating the competitive pull of tournament Magic. And if, like **Cid**, *you can't wait for the next meeting, why not roll up your sleeves and organise your own?*

WHO IS CID?

My real name is John Milner. I am 28 years old, married with one daughter. In the real world I am an Information Analyst. I have been playing Magic since the end of Legends, and organise The Gathering type II tournament. My favourite colour in Magic is Red and my favourite card is the Cyclopean Mummy which I am collecting in all its printings.

There is little doubt in my mind that while Magic is one of the best and most popular collectable card games on the market today, it really comes into its own in a competitive tournament or league environment. I like nothing better than to sit down on a Sunday evening with my friends for a quick multi-player game but, when I'm sat across the table from a stranger, both of us with finely-tuned competitive decks, those friendly gatherings with monstrous 200-card decks towering over the table fade into insignificance.

So, with competitive Magic being so much fun, how do you go about setting up a small league or tournament?

Tournament or League

These are the two main types of competitive event. A league is often run over several weeks with each person playing every other player. While leagues have the advantage of being easier to run on an organisational basis, requiring smaller and often easier-to-find venues, they have problems when you are trying to get players together for a match. Another problem is what to do if players don't play a match by the set deadline; most groups either void the match or declare it a draw.

Tournaments on the other hand are much larger affairs, with all the players gathering for a day's Magic to find out who is the best. You don't have the problem of getting players together, but

For a big tournament you'll need to hire a local hall or a hotel function room.

"I'll see you for £50." - Not a funny joke (no, really) thanks to UK laws.

The Law is an Ass

Tournament organisers recently found out the hard way that UK law regards Magic as gambling. This led to the cancellation of the Pro Tour Dallas Qualifier in Nottingham and a lot of embarrassed faces at WotC UK! Without going into too much legal jargon, the The Gaming Act 1968 states that unless Collectable Card Game tournaments are run on premises that are licensed for gambling they are illegal, unless they satisfy the exemption clause in Section 41. To satisfy this exemption clause they must:

- **Not have an entry fee of more than £3. This is for the entertainment (day), so if there is more than one tournament on the same day the entrance fee for all the tournaments may not exceed £3.**
- **Not have prizes worth more in total than £300. For Magic products, the prizes must be calculated at their suggested retail value.**
- **Not make a profit. The actual paragraph mentions private gain, without definition of private gain.**

Unfortunately, there is no sign of this law being rescinded. However, it has been hinted that WotC is appealing against this law.

they will require much more organisation and a larger venue.

If you are intending to run the tournament on a regular basis you may consider applying for Sanctioning – this will make the tournament official so players can increase their rankings, and you will receive a small amount of prize support. Sanctioning forms are available by ringing Wizards of the Coast UK on 0345 125599.

There is currently no official standard for leagues in the UK, but the Arena league, which is underway in the USA, is due to be rolled out to the UK sometime soon. The Arena league is a way for shops to participate in an official league structure with player rankings and special prizes for the winners. Watch this space.

Rules of the game

There are several official standards for organised play at the moment. These are Classic (Type I), Restricted Classic (Type 1.5), Standard (Type II) and Sealed Deck (see the Tournament Legal box overleaf). In all these formats (except sealed deck) each player's deck must have at least 60 cards (40 for sealed deck), and may have a 15-card sideboard (to modify your deck between duels). No more than four of each non-basic land card may be used, and some cards are restricted to one or banned completely.

Generally, the format of Magic tournaments in the UK is based on the best of three duels (five for the finals), in six rounds of Swiss-style play. Swiss format starts with players being randomly drawn against each other. In the subsequent rounds players are drawn against someone with a similar score record (ie. a 2-0 winner will be drawn against another 2-0 winner), which has the effect of separating the ability level of the field into groups. The top 8 or 16 players (depending on the numbers) then play in knockout rounds to find the overall winner.

Other rules which are used in official events include:

1. NO CHEATING (obviously)
Cheating includes (but is not limited to) coaching, marking cards and manipulating cards.

2. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT
This covers issues such as profanity, arguing with the Judge and being disruptive.

3.CARDS MUST BE KEPT ABOVE THE TABLE.

4.NO PROXY CARDS.

It's worth noting that while these rules and the others issued by the Duelists' Convocation are not required for non-sanctioned tournaments, they are excellent guidelines for any tournament.

Most tournaments are run Swiss-style, so you get at least six matches.

The Venue

Finding a suitable venue for your event is probably the hardest part of organising any tournament or league. In the case of league play, generally the best venues are games shops with playing areas, or pubs. However, for a one-day tournament,

PAUL HARGREAVES
Loser of several tournaments
"It's not the winning that's important. If it was, I'd have given up long ago."

Competitive Magic hones your skills in bluffing, counter-bluffing, etc.

Drawing the wrong hand in a tournament is seriously bad news.

you need a larger venue with more facilities. The size of this venue will vary depending on how many players you anticipate and how much you expect the tournament to grow. For a small 16-32 player event, a small pub function room normally suffices, but for a larger tournament you are looking for a community or church hall-sized room.

SIMEON JONES
Organiser of the Birmingham tournament
"When refereeing be firm and fair. Remember that it's your decision, but it's best if it's backed up by the rulings. A computer program can help make your life far easier... The amount of paperwork generated by a 72-player event can be large. However, if using a computer, make sure you have some form of back-up system, ie. players filling in results cards as well. Also, try not to spill beer on it as I did!"

The two best places to find out about venues are public libraries (which usually have a list of such places) and the local council. If you know any people who run charity events (such as jumble sales) or club events, you can always ask them if they know of any venues – in fact, this is how I found the venue for The Gathering (a monthly sanctioned type II tournament in Doncaster with a Mox first prize, which we have been running for seven months).

Finally, you should be aware of how much the venue is going to cost you, because this will have an affect on the entry fee you charge and the prizes you can supply. Ideally, for league events a venue which you can hire by the hour is preferable, whereas for tournaments a flat daily rate is best. The prices will vary, but you should aim to keep these costs as low as possible.

CHRIS RUDRAM
Player of many tournaments
"For big tournaments like Doncaster, you just want a friendly atmosphere, varied opponents and trading opportunities. For smaller events, prizes worth entering for (boosters). I reckon I'm more likely to do well against 16 people over 80."

Advertising the event

Now you have a venue, date and format, it's time to let the world know.

There are several ways to advertise. The simplest is word of mouth – let your friends know and get them to pass on the message. Next you can write or print some posters. Get as many gaming shops as you can to put these up and always leave a few at any clubs or tournaments that you attend.

If you have Internet access either from a home or work account, or via a cyber café, there are places you can post details of your tournament. Two excellent places for the UK are Mike Bristow's World Wide Web page `http://www.shivan.demon.co.uk/tourney/` and the UK newsgroup `uk.games.trading-cards.misc` Other potential advertising spots include magazines and fanzines.

When you advertise, you should always make sure that you include the date and time of the event, price, format, any house rules and a contact name and number. One word of advice: pre-booking tournament places saves many a headache later on.

Prizes and Entry Fee

When setting an entry fee for your event, it is important to make sure that you can meet all the expenses you will incur and provide adequate prizes. Generally, the prizes will depend on the numbers of players and the format you adopt. In a large tournament you may wish to award prizes to all the knockout players.

However, for a smaller event you will probably want to restrict the prizes to the top three or four. As for what to give as prizes, I favour magic cards. At Doncaster we offer boosters for the top eight, with a Mox as first prize.

We offer cards as prizes because they put more cards into the hands of the players and thus promote the hobby, whereas cash prizes will often be spent on other products. Many tournaments do offer cash prizes which are easier to supply, as there's no sourcing involved.

Judging

To run any kind of event you will need a knowledgeable judge. This may be yourself or the local rules guru. Depending on the size of the event you may also require some referees to help. I would advise anyone intending to run an event not to play in it, because you will not have time to deal with the administration, judging and drawing the rounds.

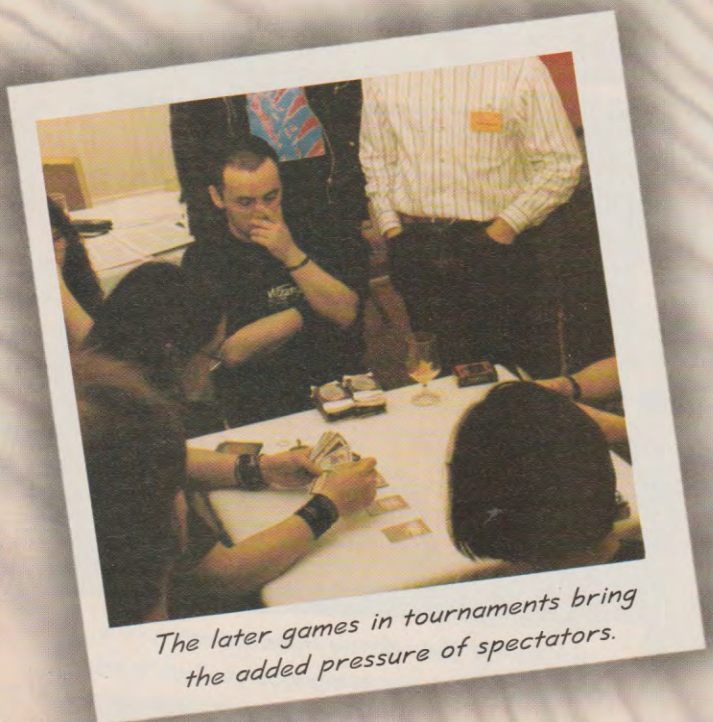
Unless you are running an officially-sanctioned event this is not mandatory but, be warned, some players do take offence at the judge/organiser playing. This is mainly due to players doubting your impartiality over rulings, and if you win there will probably be cries of 'fix'. However, if you are dead set on playing, one way of reducing this is to have two or three judges so somebody else can take ruling decisions on your matches.

If you are not a rules guru, or would like additional rules information, I would recommend that you obtain a copy of Stephen Dangelo's rulings summaries from the Internet, at `http://www.activesw.com/~sdangelo/magic.html`. This regularly-updated document contains all the information you should need to make accurate and correct decisions.

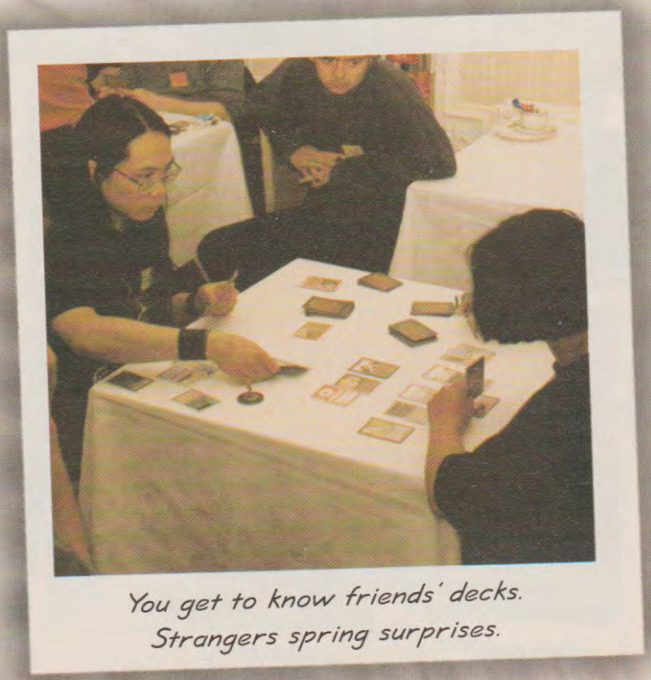
Preventing Problems in Advance

There are a number of potential problems that any event organiser might face, and with a little advance work these can be avoided. If you are playing a league you must make sure that you have access to the venue when you need it – this is not so much of a problem in a shop, but can be difficult if you are using hired facilities which could be booked by another group.

For tournaments, which will generally last five to ten hours, you have more problems to overcome. Firstly, make sure that amenities are available and that you have plenty of toilet tissue!



The later games in tournaments bring the added pressure of spectators.



You get to know friends' decks. Strangers spring surprises.

tournament legal

Obviously any set of tournament rules requires a standardised set of cards available for deck construction to maintain an even playing field. The banned/restricted lists for Magic are updated on fixed dates (Type I on March 1st and September 1st, and Type II is changed quarterly). In the case of all tournaments, decks can only contain four of any non-basic land card in the deck and sideboard. However, some cards are further restricted or even banned due to their power.

CLASSIC (TYPE I)

Restricted List
Ancestral Recall
Balance
Berserk
Black Lotus
Braingeyser
Candelabra of Tawnos
Copy Artifact
Demonic Tutor
Fastbond
Feldons Cane
Fork
Ivory Tower
Library of Alexandria
Maze of Ith
Mirror Universe
Mishras Workshop
Mox Emerald
Mox Jet
Mox Pearl
Mox Ruby
Mox Sapphire
Recall
Regrowth
Sol Ring
Time Walk
Timetwister
Underworld Dreams
Wheel of Fortune
Zuran Orb

Banned List
Amulet of Quoz
Bronze Tablet
Channel
Chaos Orb
Contract from Below
Darkpact
Demonic Attorney
Divine Intervention
Falling Star
Jewelled Bird
Mind Twist
Rebirth
Shahrazad
Tempest Efreet
Timmerian Fiends

Any other ante card not mentioned above

STANDARD (TYPE II)

As of January 1st, 1997, players may include the following card sets, in addition to Fourth Edition:
Alliances
Chronicles
Homelands
Mirage

Note: As of March 5th, 1997, Homelands will no longer be Type II legal and Visions will be allowed.

Banned List
Balance
Black Vise
Bronze Tablet
Channel
Ivory Tower
Jewelled Bird
Land Tax
Mind Twist
Rebirth
Strip Mine
Tempest Efreet
Timmerian Fiends
Any other ante card not mentioned above

Type II tournaments are designed to keep players on an equal footing by removing old (hard to get) cards from the sets available.

CLASSIC RESTRICTED (TYPE 1.5)

Banned List

Any card appearing on either the Banned or Restricted Lists for Type II or Type I tournaments.

Any other ante card not mentioned above.

ADDITIONAL FORMATS

Ice Age only constructed deck.
Ice Age/Alliances (ALICE) constructed deck.
Ice Age/Alliances sealed deck.
Mirage only constructed deck.
Mirage/Visions (MAVIS) constructed deck.
Mirage/Visions sealed deck.

Sealed deck tournaments can be of two general types: *Standard* – where you get one starter plus two boosters and up to five basic land of your choice to construct a deck. *Booster Draft* – players receive a number of booster packs. Seated in groups of eight, each player opens a booster and selects one card, then passes the remaining cards to the player on the left. This cycle continues until the boosters are exhausted. The cards you have drafted are yours to build a deck. Basic land is provided.

Of course these formats are not mandatory, and you can experiment with various non-official formats such as Emperor Magic (three-player teams), Random Pairs (randomly selected two-player teams), Two Headed Giant (two-player team with shared life points), Grand Mêlée (multi-player) or Chaos Magic (multi-player with a randomly changing environment).

For the current official tournament rules ☎ WotC on 0345 125599 or on the WWW http://www.wizards.com/

JOHN GARRETT
Thames Valley tournament organiser
"When players see an event running smoothly, it is often due to the many hours of work done by the organisers in preparing for the event."

If you can afford to buy some cans of drink and snacks, get a small amount to sell on the day. Most players will bring drinks and food, but others are sure to forget or run out.

If you want to obtain catering for hot food, the easiest way is to approach a roadside caf' or small catering firm and offer them free access to set up and sell food to the players. Be sure to give them some idea of the numbers of players involved because this will affect their decision and the amount of stock they need for the day.

Finally, be sure to prepare for the event at least the night before. In the last minute rush you might forget something.

The Big Day

Now you've got everything sorted out and you're ready to start, remember the most important aspect of Magic – enjoy yourself. Even though players are coming to try to win prizes, they want a good day out with plenty of fun. As the organiser, you should also try to enjoy the atmosphere and get the most out of the day. Take your trading cards, and take advantage of the event to obtain a few cards you need.

Try to chat with the players, discuss strategies, and get feedback about how the event is going – after all, the people who can best inform you of problems are the players themselves.

Seven months ago, The Gathering started with 38 players. We made some big mistakes, but listened carefully to the advice given to us. We're now drawing 70-80 players, and continue to grow.

At the end of the event, you will have found out why we tournament organisers work so hard. As the players leave having won, lost or drawn, with smiles on their faces saying, 'thanks, great day, see you next month', you know it's all been a success. Good luck.

Blanket of Night
Enchantment
Goblin Swine-Rider
Summon Goblin
If Goblin Swine-Rider is blocked, it deals 2 damage to each attacking creature and 2 damage to each blocking creature.
"May you get the mount you deserve."
—Suq'Ata curse
Illus. G. Darrow & L. Rabarot
1/1
Rats
Rats deals X damage to
in this way.
1/1

MY DECK

Nigel Jefferson

White weenie? Ernham and burn 'em? Everyone has their own favourite Magic deck. In the first of a new series, Cid asks tournament players and industry people what makes theirs tick.

'WISPS' – OLD TYPE 2 DECK

ARTIFACTS
4 The Rack

CREATURES
4 Hypnotic Specters
2 Order of the Ebon Hand
2 Will o the Wisp
2 Vampire Bats

SPELLS
1 Mind Twist
4 Hymn to Tourach
4 Paralysis
3 Withering Wisps
4 Thrull Retainers
4 Unholy Strength
4 Dark Ritual
2 Drain Life

LAND
17 Snow Covered Swamp
3 Mishra's Factory

KEY CARDS
Hypnotic Specters
Order of the Ebon Hand
Mind Twist
Hymn to Tourach
Thrull Retainers
Unholy Strength

'FORK YOU TOO' – TYPE 1 BLAST DECK

ARTIFACTS
1 Candelabra of Tawnos
1 Red Mana Battery
1 Sol Ring

CREATURES
2 Shivan Dragon

SPELLS
4 Mana Flares
4 Forks
4 Disintegrate
4 Fireball
1 Demonic Tutor
1 Mind Twist
1 Brain Geyser
1 Timetwister
1 Wheel of Fortune
1 Bazaar of Bagdad
2 Drain Power
3 Mana Drain
4 Counter Spell

LAND
2 Full set of Urza Lands
4 Volcanic Island
4 Underground Sea
4 Badlands
5 Mountains
5 Islands

KEY CARDS
Candelabra of Tawnos
Mana Flares
Forks
Fireball/ Disintegrate
Mana Drain

Nigel Jefferson started playing *Magic* three years ago when Antiquities was still on the shelves. Though only 15 then, he has since competed, successfully, in both Type 1 and Type 2 tournaments. Not surprisingly, he has not one but two favourite decks, one for each rule set.

"My favourite Type 1 deck is probably a Blast deck called Fork You Too. It was modified from a magazine article entitled Fork You, mainly by adding counter magic and a Candelabra of Tawnos, to become a very strong deck. However, while it is powerful, it's mainly a fun deck designed to generate an obscene amount of damage.

THE HIPPY

Hypnotic Specter
Summon Specter
Flying
An opponent damaged by Specter discards a card at random from his or her hand. Ignore this effect if that opponent has no cards in hand.
"There was no trace of anguish on that disunited face – only a mask of blood-lust and cold calculation."

"The other deck which comes to mind is an old Type 2 deck nick-named 'The Wisp'. This was probably the most successful deck our group ever built. It was basically a Necroless Necro deck which relied on enhanced Black creatures such as Hypnotic Specters and Black Knights, plus hand disruption."

BUILDING THE DECK

"Fork You Too was a very strong deck before modification but the addition of counter magic, specifically the Mana Drains, took the deck to its peak. Using the Mana Drains to steal my opponent's Mana enabled me to cast large Fireballs which could be forked to finish them off.

"Additionally, you could use the Mana which was generated from the Mana Drains or Drain Power to cast a large Mind Twist or Brain Geyser. One vital combination was using the Mana Flares to support the Candelabra.

"The Wisp deck was originally built from a Type 1 deck with Underworld Dreams but without Necropotence – which was in the sideboard – because we didn't see the power of Necro and were wary of blast decks.

"Three main principles dictated how this deck was built. First, the small and efficient creatures could be enhanced using the Thrull Retainers and Unholy Strength. Secondly, hand destruction has always been strong and this deck could exploit the disruption to the maximum effect. Finally, the Withering Wisps could be used to clear the table of my opponent's creatures whilst I could still regenerate my own.

"At that time it was hard to destroy a Black Knight with a Thrull Retainer. Sadly, the deck has become less powerful as Wizards of the Coast has removed several key cards from the tournament scene, such as Mind Twist. The final nail in the coffin was the reversal of the multiple pump rule for Pestilence."

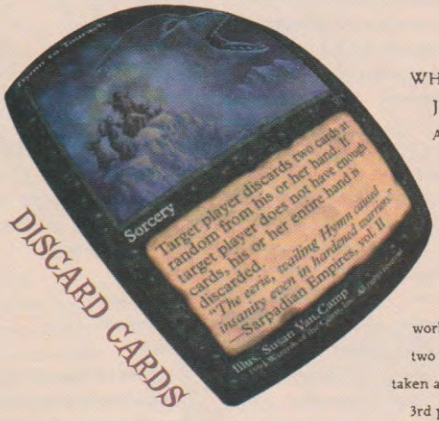
PLAYING THE DECK

"Fork You Too relied on getting a Mana flare out as quickly as possible and supporting it with counter magic, especially Mana Drain. If your opponent cast anything, you would Mana Drain it, use Drain Power and the Candelabra to generate large amounts of Mana and then either fry them, Brain Geyser or Mind Twist them.

"In contrast, the Wisp deck could win quickly from turn one by casting a first turn Dark Ritual, Black Knight and either Unholy Strength or Thrull Retainer – it was not uncommon to be attacked by a 7/4 Hippy or 8/5 regenerating Black Knight on the second turn. Other early plays included first turn Hippies and Hymn, or a five-card Mind Twist."

GREATEST MOMENTS

"All great decks have those memorable moments of perfection, when everything comes together, though sometimes, when chaos reigns, they catastrophically fall apart! These decks are no exceptions.


DISCARD CARDS
Sorcery
Target player discards two cards at random from his or her hand. If target player does not have enough cards, his or her entire hand is discarded.
"The eerie, wailing Hymn caused insanity even in hardened warriors."
—Sarpadian Empires, vol. II
Illus. Susan Van Camp

"On one occasion Fork You Too hit Jeff Crowe – a fellow Scarborough player – for 34 damage on the fourth turn. Using a Red Mana Battery, a Mountain, a full Urzatron, a Sol Ring and the Candelabra, it was possible to cast a 16 point Fireball, which was of course forked. Excellent!"

The Wisp deck has had even greater moments in tournament play – "At a Type 2 tournament in Birmingham it won on two consecutive days. After the first day, which saw both Ben Martin and myself in the finals, playing identical decks all bar Land, Graham Thompson (UK No 3) went away and completely rebuilt his deck for the second day.

"Jeff Crowe also used a highly successful variant of this deck to beat Uwe Stroinski (UK No 1 and World No 3) at the Gathering 2, one year later."

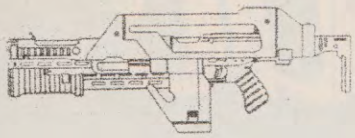
CHEAP INFLATABLES

Order of the Ebon Hand
Summon Clerics
Protection from white
: +1/+0 until end of turn
: First strike until end of turn
A true follower of Tourach need not be concerned to the exclusion of other concerns.

As for problems – "In one game I went through 20 or so cards without successfully casting a single spell, because I only drew creature enchantments and no creatures. Ironically, I eventually managed to win this game by Wisping away all my opponent's creatures."

WHO IS NIGEL JEFFERSON?

At only 18 years of age, Nigel Jefferson is ranked 14th in the UK and number 240 in the world. He has won two events and has taken a lot of 2nd and 3rd places. He puts his high ranking down to beating top players and the quality of Northern players. He lives in Scarborough, North Yorkshire.



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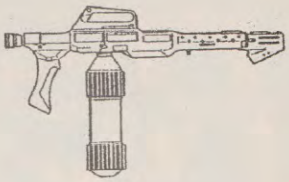

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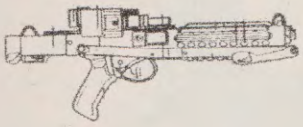

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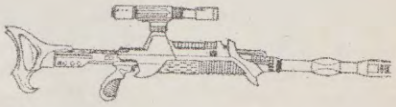

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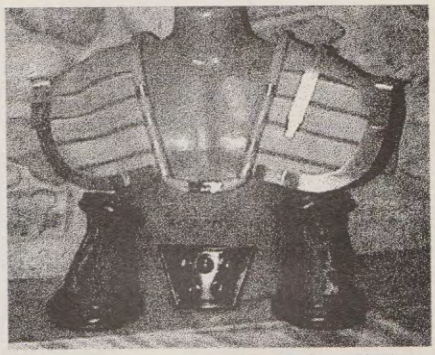

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The Icons

Each review in arcane is identified with a rather nifty icon showing what kind of game it is. Here's what they mean:

Books and Supplements

Computer Games and Utilities

Dice games and expansions

Collectable card games and expansions

Roleplaying Systems

Board Games, Miniature Systems

The Scores

Everything reviewed in arcane gets a mark out of 10. Here's a guide to what the individual marks represent...

10/10
Perfect.
There's simply nothing better.

9/10
Excellent, a classic.
Highly recommended.

8/10
Very good, with few problems.
Recommended.

7/10
Good, but not exceptional.

6/10
Above average, but not without problems.

5/10
Average, or a mixture of good and bad.

4/10
Below average, but not without merit.

3/10
Poor, crucially flawed in some way.

2/10
Very poor, should be avoided.

1/10
Appallingly bad, no redeeming features at all.

the gaming magazine arcane reviews THIS MONTH

The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep

on page 56

The best campaign ever written? Find out in our full review...

Star Trek: The Next Generation Collectible Dice Game

on page 60

Pit the Enterprise against the Borg in the latest collectable dice game.

Delta Green

on page 58

What's happened to the Mythos in the 1990s? Find out in Pagan Publishing's mammoth new *Call of Cthulhu* sourcebook...

Chivalry & Sorcery

on page 62

The original was regarded by many as the most complex fantasy roleplaying game ever. But how does this new edition fare when compared to today's rule systems?

arcane SEAL OF APPROVAL

Each month we fight and argue among ourselves to select that one extra-special product most deserving of your money and the coveted **arcane** accolade.

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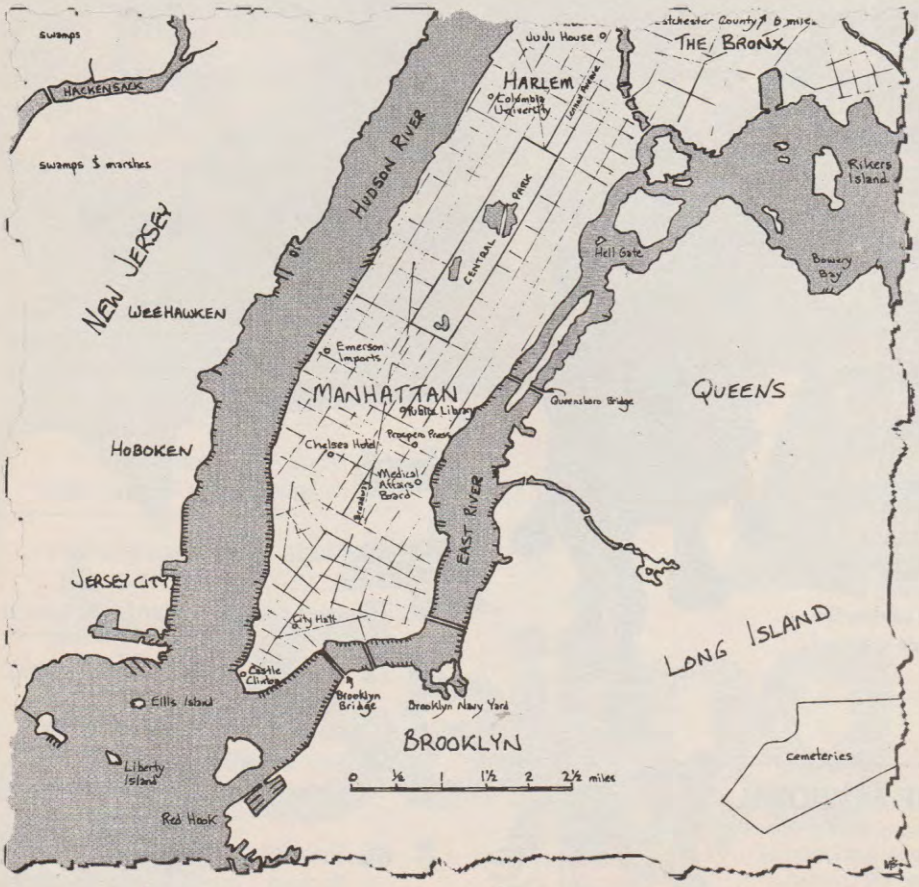
The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep

A revised version of one of the greatest roleplaying campaigns ever. But is it improved, or spoiled?

BABYLON 5 Larry Ditillio, who wrote *Masks of Nyarlathotep*, gave up writing commercial roleplaying scenarios shortly after its release. Since then he has worked as a writer on many American cartoon shows and was the script editor for the first two seasons of *Babylon 5*. He's a big fan of the CCG, *Shadowfist*

According to Keats, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Fortunately, this seems to apply to things of warped and twisted beauty, as well as those of a purer nature. Take *The Masks of Nyarlathotep*, for instance – this roleplaying classic now reprinted and revised by Chaosium. The campaign set was first released in 1984 and was received really well then. This new edition has been brought out after much painstaking work and has new illustrations, four new scenarios, more support material for the referee and has re-introduced an original chapter that was cut from the first edition, making the campaign quite a bit larger. It is, if you like, *The Masks of Nyarlathotep*: The Director's Cut.

This is a fantastic work – a piece of art painstakingly restored to its original glory. *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* is a huge campaign for *Call of Cthulhu* – a globe-spanning, death-defying guarantee of insanity. It features scores of exotic locations, hundreds of sinister – and friendly – characters, devious plots, red herrings, horrific encounters, slithering things in the darkness, arcane cults, pitched battles and enough plausible pseudo-history to keep any party of players happy for months on end.



The main thrust of the action – though I won't give away any of the plot, because this is, above all, a mystery and to do so would ruin it – is the foiling of a plan that has been years in the making, will take decades to come to fruition, and will change the world forever. The stage for this monumental design is all the corners of the world.

This is an adventure painted with a large, confident brush. It's gutsy and exciting, never afraid to go over the top – one episode pitches your group head-on against several hundred cultists, two immortal sorcerers and a minor god – and is absolutely brimming with atmosphere. At the other end of this masterful, epic scale, this is also a wonderful example of how to enliven every roleplaying session with detail. Every non-player character presented here is a small, well-buffed jewel that comes complete with enough characterisation and motivation for any referee to be easily able to roleplay him or her through any situation. In addition, every plot twist and turn is enriched by a wealth of background material that makes it completely sensible and coherent, to the referee at

REAPPEARANCE The restored chapter in *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* originally appeared in *Terror Australis*.

least – it'll hopefully leave all the players absolutely baffled.

This can, however, be an intimidating campaign to run. Be prepared for quite a bit of work as you try to get your head around 200 pages of densely packed information. There are 45 clue handouts and the place of each in the overall jigsaw must be fully understood by the referee before granting the information to the players. There are nearly 100 major non-player characters whose motives must be fully understood. And there are about 25 mini-scenarios, each of which interlinks crucially with all the others. In trying to read and understand all of this information, you'll find yourself with the feeling that your head will burst open from the information overload.

Once you have started to absorb it, you'll be startled by its complexity, and by the time you're ready to start playing this with a group, you'll feel like an overloaded dam, ready to pour an absolute rain of ideas and situations on the unsuspecting players. This is when

it's this sort of attention to detail and the fact that someone has obviously taken a lot of time thinking about the layout and ordering of information in this campaign that makes it possible to absorb and run an adventure of this size.

And even if you don't want to play an epic, lengthy, globe-spanning campaign written by someone else, there's so much material here that this is a recommended purchase for any referee. You'll find adventures, characters, magic items and hundreds of ideas which will enliven and enrich your own campaign. It's practically a sourcebook by itself. Whether you run a campaign in the 1890s or 1990s, you shouldn't have too much trouble converting the adventures, especially in the former case.

And it's not just *Call of Cthulhu* referees who should take a look at this masterpiece either – anybody who has an interest in roleplaying games will find *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* an inspiration and an object lesson in campaign construction.

"This is a fantastic work... a globe-spanning, death-defying guarantee of insanity."

you'll discover the two, almost miraculous, elements that really put this campaign head and shoulders above the competition. The first is the sublime pacing of the campaign – this story builds

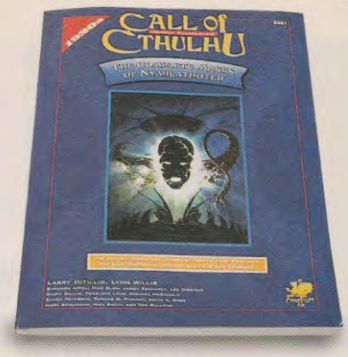
and builds, with the tension becoming palpable before the end. The second is that it manages to maintain this incredible momentum while still being entirely non-linear – the order in which your players perform the various set-pieces is unimportant to the ultimate resolution of the campaign.

Although *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* is undeniably tough to prepare, this is, of course, a case of perseverance being well-rewarded. Your players are unlikely ever to have come across anything this grand and intricate – unless you spend *all* your time designing adventures for your players – and the material is greatly enjoyable to read and absorb, so it won't be too much of a chore. Just don't expect this to be something that you'll be able to pull off the shelf one quiet evening and run straight away.

Having said that, another of the terrific things about *Masks* is that while you're actually running the thing, you'll find that most of the information you need is presented in just the right order for you to be able to find it quickly and at the right moment. So when a player asks for something, the chances are the answer will be the very next thing you look at in the book. Even if you can't find it immediately, the well-prepared timeline, index of characters, or the clues reference at the beginning of each section, will soon help you track it down.

This remains one of roleplaying's finest moments, the standard by which all other campaigns should be judged. Its intricacy and open-endedness – referees are actively encouraged and supported in weaving their own material into the campaign – make it a shining example of the dizzy heights to which roleplaying can and should aspire.

So, assemble a group of close friends, purchase a copy of this, find somewhere with a table to play it on and access to enough coffee to keep you *really* alert and put aside a year or so of time for one of the most rewarding, difficult, confounding and downright toughest campaigns ever compiled.



VITAL INFO

title:	*The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep*
system:	a campaign for *Call of Cthulhu*
price:	£12.99
publisher:	Chaosium
	001 510 547 7681
released:	out now
e-mail:	chaosium@aol.com
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Also available...

There's a very fine range of campaign material available for *Call of Cthulhu*, for the most part of a very high standard. Though, aside from *Horrors' Heart* (**arcane** 14, 9/10), there has been precious little of this high-quality material released recently. Referees planning to run this may also consider investing in *The London Guidebook* (**arcane** 10, 8/10) and *The Cairo Guidebook* (**arcane** 1, 8/10) for extra background material.

The Final Verdict

"If ever there was a campaign – for any roleplaying system – that could be described as a work of art, this is it. It's a piece of sustained imagination that is the equal of many classics of literature and cinema and has passed the ultimate test of any imaginative work – time. It still reads as freshly and well as it did 13 (gulp) years ago."

Steve Faragher

Score 10/10

Delta Green

pagan publishing finally unveils its modern-day setting for *call of cthulhu.*

IT'S A MONSTER

At no less than 300 pages, *Delta Green* is 60 pages longer than the 5th Edition of the *Call of Cthulhu* rules!

After no less than four long years of work and a great deal of hardened *CoC* fans to please, Pagan Publishing's *Delta Green* sourcebook for *Call of Cthulhu* has finally arrived. As John Tynes (one of the three principal authors, along with Adam Scott Glancy and Dennis Detwiller) explains in the introduction to this massive 300-page book, the original idea for *Delta Green* came about in the summer of 1992, and a short article and scenario based on the concept appeared in issue 7 of *The Unspeakable Oath*, Pagan Publishing's *Call of Cthulhu* magazine.

Inspired by the success of the article, work on a full sourcebook began at the start of 1993. Since then, a couple of release dates have come and gone, and Pagan has published several other supplements, sourcebooks and adventures for *Call of Cthulhu*. All the while, though, *Delta Green* has been simmering away in the background. Now, after several revisions, the book is finished. So what is *Delta Green?*

Well, prepare yourself for some gaming heresy. As good as *Call of Cthulhu* is, it's not without some inherent limitations and recurring problems. Firstly, the game has never presented an adequate rationale for groups of individuals to band together and fight the forces of the Mythos. The literature is little help, as Lovecraft's protagonists are, for the most part, lone individuals fighting simply to remain sane in the face of realisations that have been thrust upon them by their own curiosity. In fact, because realism is so inherent to the success of the game, coming up with a believable justification for the PCs to group together (and for new characters to be introduced) has become a key element of writing a good *Cthulhu* adventure or campaign.

Related to this is the fact that the players often end up having to overcome the same mundane problems time after time – trying to gain access to law enforcement files, interviewing suspects without having any authority and so on – all of which can get just a bit repetitive after a while.

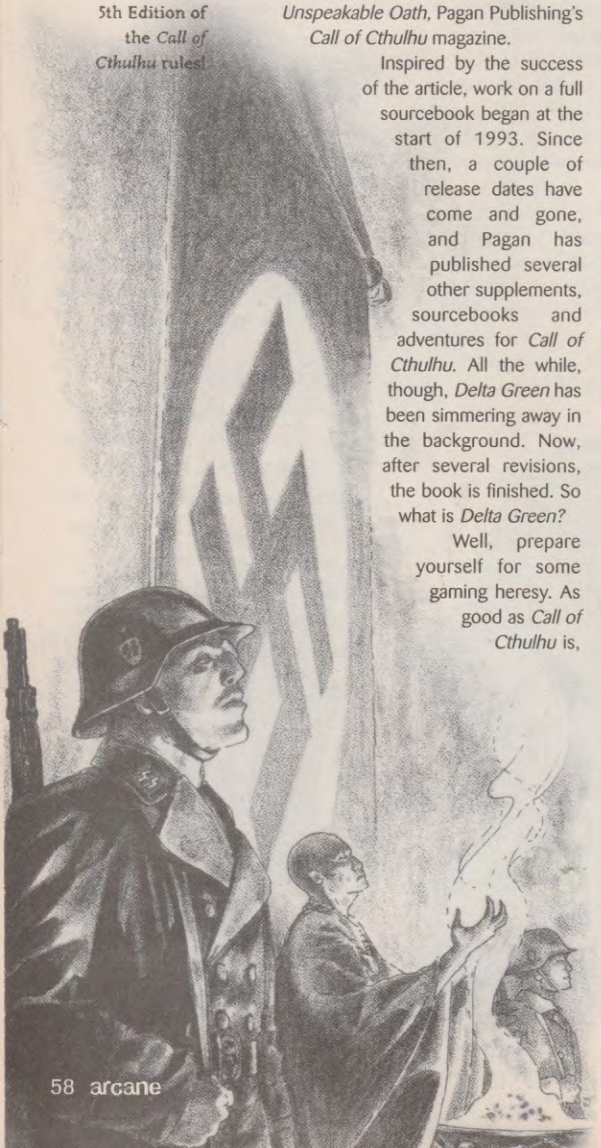
Secondly, although the 1920s is a rich and fascinating setting for the game, it can cause problems for groups of players who aren't particularly interested in historical recreations. In theory there should be no problem running *Call of Cthulhu* in a modern-day setting, but in practise it's not quite so simple. Although small isolated villages where strange cults thrive and grow, expeditions sponsored by millionaire playboys, and musty libraries overflowing with weird and occult books are all acceptable in the 1920s, these and many other *Cthulhu* staples simply don't work in a modern campaign where every house has a TV on which they can watch documentaries about places all over the world. In fact, if the forces of the Mythos continued to operate now in the same way that they did in the '20s, we'd probably be watching footage of them on the news. Instead, the only 'paranormal' activity that gets widespread media attention these days are, somewhat predictably, UFO and alien abductions.

Delta Green, then, is an attempt to provide *Call of Cthulhu* referees with a structure for running modern-day campaigns that overcomes all these problems. Not only does it succeed, but the result is one of the best sourcebooks ever to see the light of print.

The book itself is split into six chapters and no less than nine appendices. Without wanting to give too much away, *Delta Green* proposes a

NOT X-ACTLY

While there are some *X-Files* overtones to *Delta Green*, the book predates the TV show. Spooky.



not just cthulhu

Although *Delta Green* has been designed to give *Call of Cthulhu* referees an alternative modern-day setting for their games, there's a lot of stuff here that could be very useful to the referee of any conspiracy-based game.

For a start, all of the major groups and organisations could easily be transferred to almost any conspiracy game, with only a few minor changes being required to make them 'fit' into a different campaign setting. The 'truth' behind the aliens, while requiring some work, could be adapted in a number of different ways. Two of the three adventures could also be used with minimal reworking.

Perhaps the most useful stuff for referees of other games, though, lies in the appendices about security classifications and federal agencies. The explanation of US government security codes is very interesting, and comes complete with several example documents from a variety of different time periods. With a little work this chapter makes it easy to produce authentic-looking player handouts, a simple technique which can definitely pay dividends in terms of atmosphere and player involvement.

The exhaustive list of US government agencies, on the other hand, is almost tailor made for *Conspiracy X*, and presents a wide variety of alternate backgrounds for Aegis operatives for that game. It also gives additional information on the existing careers from the *Conspiracy X* rulebook, all of which is very useful.

Finally, the whole of *Delta Green* is simply oozing with ideas and inspiration for any number of adventures and campaign ideas, most of which could be applied to any modern-day horror/conspiracy game. In fact, the book as a whole rates almost as highly as a source for these other games as it does for *Call of Cthulhu*.

secret organisation that's working within the US government, to which the player characters either belong or are 'on friendly terms' with. Because the majority of this organisation's recruits work for US intelligence and law enforcement agencies, it provides a justification for the players to work together and also gives them the powers to actually investigate various strange occurrences.

The first chapter, The Big Picture, begins with a broad overview of the contents of the book and its central themes. Also included here are notes and suggestions for putting all of this together into a coherent campaign. Although only two pages long, this ranks as some of the best advice on setting up a campaign I've ever read. In fact, this is a common theme throughout *Delta Green* – the authors are dedicated gamers, and it shows.

Following this overview are a number of sections which cover some of the main elements of the Delta Green setting, including details of the Mythos in the 1990s, the key antagonists in the main plot, as well as the history of US intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

The next five chapters are each dedicated to one of the major groups around which the setting revolves. These form the core of both the book itself and the campaign structure it proposes. Unfortunately, because *Delta Green* concerns itself with conspiracies and mysteries, it's very hard to mention any specifics about these groups without running the risk of spoiling it for any potential players. Suffice to say that each of the five groups is described in extensive detail, complete with a timeline of important events and full details and game statistics for some of the major characters belonging to each.

The appendices then cover a number of related subjects. First comes the Bibliography, which includes notes on a number of books that may prove useful and interesting to a *Delta Green* referee. Following this is a Glossary, which includes many terms used by modern US agencies, helping the referee to add some authenticity to non-player characters' speech.

Appendix C then takes a look at the security classifications used by the US government. Similar in purpose to the preceding Glossary, the aim here is to help the referee to create authentic-looking handouts for the players. It's followed by Appendix D, which features four critical documents from the *Delta Green* background, laid out and presented as real US government files. As well as being interesting and useful in their own right as handouts, they also serve as good examples of the classifications explained in Appendix C.

Appendix E is the largest, containing two complete adventures and one 'mini-campaign' for *Delta Green*. The first, Puppet Shows and Shadow Plays, is designed to introduce new players to *Delta Green*. Convergence, the next adventure, introduces some of the major plot-lines that run throughout the book. The mini-campaign, The New Age, is an Earth- and sanity-shattering story which exposes the players to some of the 'truth' behind the mysteries they will no doubt have uncovered in previous adventures.

Finally, the last four appendices all concern themselves with creating characters suited to a *Delta Green* campaign. As well as a brief overview of what kind of characters work best, there's an extensive list of Federal Agencies for which characters might be working, together with background information and suggested skills. This is followed in turn by descriptions of some new skills that will prove very useful in the *Delta Green* setting, and a listing of modern firearms from around the world.

Right from the first page of the book it's obvious that *Delta Green* is something really special. It certainly achieves what it sets out to do – present a campaign structure for modern-day *Call of Cthulhu* games that solves the few inherent difficulties presented by the rules – and does so with a wealth of rich detail, intricate plotting and great imagination. The result is truly inspiring.

"It achieves what it sets out to do with a wealth of rich detail, intricate plotting and great imagination. The result is truly inspiring."

If you've ever wanted to run a modern-day *CoC* campaign, this is a must. It's not a 'ready to run' campaign and it will require some work from the ref, but as a framework for a long-term game, it's almost without equal.

VITAL INFO

title:	*Delta Green*
system:	A sourcebook for *Call of Cthulhu*
price:	£TBA
publisher:	Pagan Publishing
	001 206 528 7665
released:	out in February
e-mail:	rev@halcyon.com
web site:	http://www.halcyon.com/rev/pagan.html

Also available...

There are a number of other games dealing with the 'UFO conspiracy', all of which can be useful to you if you're interested in running a *Delta Green* campaign – *Conspiracy X*, *GURPS Illuminati*, *Hidden Invasion* and *Don't Look Back* are some of the best. Likewise, *Delta Green* could serve as a valuable source of ideas for anyone running these games (see the 'Not just *Cthulhu*' boxout).

The Final Verdict

"One of the biggest, most detailed, best conceived and inspiring sourcebooks ever released for any game system. An absolute must for any *Call of Cthulhu* referee considering a modern-day campaign, and highly recommended even if you're not. It may have taken four years to arrive, but *Delta Green* has been worth the wait."

Andy Butcher

Score 9/10

Star Trek: The Ne
Collectible Dice Game

five rings boldly goes where no company has gone before...

MORE TO COME

Five Rings is planning a variety of releases for the *Star Trek* dice game in the coming months. First to arrive will be expansion sets for both the Federation and the Borg, followed by more ships (to include Klingon and Romulan vessels), a multi-player expansion and a strategy guide.

The *Star Trek* universe has got tremendous gaming potential – a fact that hasn't missed the attention of several gaming companies over the years. FASA's *Star Trek* roleplaying system still ranks as one of the most successful of all time, for example, and *Star Fleet Battles* from Task Force Games continues to attract a loyal following. Likewise, when collectable card games proved successful, both Decipher and Fleer released *Star Trek* games, covering *The Next Generation* and the original show respectively.

The latest style of game to arrive is collectable dice, first seen in *Dragon Dice*, the extremely popular TSR game. The *Star Trek: The Next Generation Collectible Dice Game* from Five Rings is an attempt to combine the potential of *Star Trek* with the possibilities of this fairly new format. And, despite its rather clumsy name, it remains a very worthy attempt indeed.

The *ST:TNG CDG* recreates space combat in the *Star Trek* universe. Each player controls a starship and the aim, simply enough, is to destroy your opponent. The first releases for the system are two boxed starter sets based on the recent *First Contact* movie, each of which contains a complete starship and everything you need to play it – either as the new Enterprise E or as the Borg Sphere.

Each ship is represented by dice and a cardboard control panel and ship screen. The dice themselves are split into two main groups – status dice and system dice. Status dice are never rolled but instead are used to keep track of important aspects of the ship, such as the integrity and power output of the Warp Core, reserve power levels, shield strength and the facing and position of your ship relative to your opponent's.

The system dice, on the other hand, represent the major systems of the ship and are the dice you actually roll. They are split into five categories – Command, Movement, Repair, Special and Weapons. Each system dice is worth 1, 2, 3 or 4 points, depending on whether it has 6, 8, 10 or 12 sides. In addition, each ship has a damage dice which is rolled by the opponent to determine the effects of a successful hit. The dice are all organised on the control panel, which has spaces for all the various systems and status dice.

The game itself is played in turns. At the start of the turn, players use their ship screens to conceal their control panels from their opponent, and then use energy from the Warp Core and reserve power to activate system dice for the turn. Once both players have activated the dice of their choice, the screens are removed and the turn proceeds in a number of 'volleys'.

During each volley, the player can roll active dice from their control panel – one Movement dice and/or one or more other dice of the same type. A player controlling the Enterprise E, for example, could roll an active Movement dice and then two active Phaser dice. As each dice is rolled, the opposing player has the chance to roll some of their dice in reaction. Once all the results are calculated, the opponent gets a volley and play continues to alternate in this fashion until both players decide to pass.

Each ship then gets some automatic damage control and shield recharging, and then the turn is over and a new one begins. Play continues until one player manages to reduce the Warp Core integrity of their opponent's ship to nothing, at which point the ship suffers a Warp Core breach and explodes.

The *Star Trek: The Next Generation Collectible Dice Game* suffers from a rather steep initial learning curve, as have all collectable dice games so far. With 25 dice in each Starter Set there are a lot of icons to learn, and the rulebook doesn't help as much as it should, being

NOTHING'S PERFECT

Unfortunately, as with so many new games releases, the *ST:TNG CDG* rules are not without some mistakes and omissions. A full errata can be found at Five Rings' WWW site (see 'vital info').

STAYING POWER

The collectable dice game seems to be here to stay. When TSR first released *Dragon Dice*, it was an instant hit. The next new dice game to arrive will be *Dicemaster* from ICE and Hobbygames – look out for a full review in **arcane** soon.

"The *ST:TNG CDG* is that rarest of licenses – one that remains faithful to the material that inspired it *and* is a truly excellent game in its own right."

t Generation

somewhat confusingly laid out and hard to follow in places. After a couple of games, though, you realise that the mechanics of the rules are, in fact, elegant and simple – they're just not very easy to explain in written form.

It's once you get over this initial bump that the *ST:TNG CDG* quickly starts to come into its own. This is one of the best designed games to have been released in some time. Not only does it offer the player a wide variety of tactical and strategic options, it also succeeds at capturing the atmosphere of *Star Trek* space combat. The simple use of *Star Trek* terminology throughout is a major contributor, but the structure of the game has also been designed to closely mirror *Star Trek*.

As such, the *ST:TNG CDG* is that rarest of licenses – one that remains faithful to the material that inspired it *and* is a truly excellent game in its own right. The result is something that's greater than the sum of its parts. The fact that the game is based on *Star Trek* means that most players will immediately understand the basics and is an immeasurable aid to visualising the actions that the dice represent.

Furthermore, the fact that it's so well designed means that it's both challenging and captivating to play.

The only real problem with the game as it stands (excepting the rulebook, which really should have been clearer) is that the ships can't be customised very much. Each ship has a maximum starting points value for each main system – the Enterprise E, for example, can begin the game with 8 points of forward-firing Photon Torpedo dice. In theory this means that you could, for example, use two 12-sided dice (4 points each), four eight-sided dice (2 points each), or any other combination. Unfortunately, the Enterprise Starter Sets only include 12-sided Photon Torpedo dice. In fact, the only customisation that can be performed with either of the two Starter Sets is to choose which eight-sided Movement dice to select each turn from the choice of the two different ones available to each ship.

The good side, of course, is that each Starter Set features the same complete ship and includes everything you need to start playing the game. It also has to be said that the sheer number of options offered by the structure of the game means that it's very re-playable, even without the option of customising your ship. However, until the first expansion packs are released, there is a slight question mark hanging over the *ST:TNG CDG*. But if the expansion sets are up to the same high quality as these Starters, the *ST:TNG CDG* should become *the* premier collectable dice game.

This is an example of the dice, control panel and ship screen of the Enterprise E after a couple of turns have passed. The ship has taken a lot of pounding, as indicated by the Off-Line and Damaged dice, and the Forward Shields are down. Still, there's plenty of life left in the Enterprise E yet...

VITAL INFO

title:	*Star Trek: The Next Generation Collectible Dice Game*
system:	a collectable dice game
price:	Starter Set £12.99
publisher:	Five Rings Publishing Group
	001 206 401 9088
released:	out now
web site:	http://www.frpg.com/

And the players said...

paul: "The best-designed dice game yet – and great fun."

ian: "Perfectly captures the feel of *Star Trek* space combat."

steve: "Very clever and well designed, but I didn't enjoy it enough."

Also available...

Dice games are a fairly new idea. TSR's *Dragon Dice* (**arcane** 1) started the ball rolling, and has since been followed by *Chaos Progenitus* (**arcane** 11). *Dragon Dice* is similar in complexity to the *ST:TNG CDG*, but each dice represents a unit in an army. *Chaos Progenitus* uses dice to represent parts of a single entity, as does the *ST:TNG CDG*, but the latter is a much simpler game.

The Final Verdict

"A great game which features high-quality components, a very clever design, and perfectly captures both the feel and atmosphere of *Star Trek* space combat. Without a doubt the best-designed collectable dice system so far, if the expansion sets live up to the game's potential the *ST:TNG CDG* will be all but unbeatable."

Andy Butcher

Score 8/10

Chivalry & Sorcery 3rd Edition

chivalry & sorcery is certainly medieval, but is it also a throw-back to the dark ages?

TOLKIEN THROUGH HIS HAT?

There are no hobbits in *C&S 3rd Edition*, either because the publishers are scared of Tolkien's lawyers, or because they were a silly idea. High-level Necromancers can no longer forge a One Ring, but the list of monsters still assumes that we know what Orcs and Wargs are.

In the beginning, Gygax created *Dungeons and Dragons*. And people looked at his work – and behold, it was not very good. And they did spake unto themselves, saying, 'I could do-eth better than that'. Some of them said, 'This is far too complicated, let us simplify it'.

Others said, 'This is far too simplistic, let's complicate it'.

The first lot produced *Tunnels and Trolls*, about which we shall sayeth nothing else. The second lot produced *Chivalry and Sorcery*.

Verily, they did say, this is a fantasy game with a realistic medieval setting behind it. And all the people said, 'Apart from the hobbits', and they did say, 'All right, apart from the hobbits'.

But the climate cooled, and the dinosaurs died out. A new generation of RPGs arose. *D&D* adapted and survived. *C&S* became extinct and fossilised.

And now, someone has found the DNA in Richard Attenburgh's walking stick and cloned the ruddy thing.

The original *C&S* was legendary for being very detailed, unplayably complicated and dice-intensive. So the big question is whether or not this is true of the resuscitated version?

Well, yes and no. There are certainly a lot of charts in the book – this is the sort of game which has 40 pages of skills and 50 pages of spells. The skills say things like, "The player knows how to plant, cultivate, harvest and store vegetable crops – beans, lentils, beetroot, carrots and cucumbers..." Thanks for that chaps, we do know what a vegetable is.

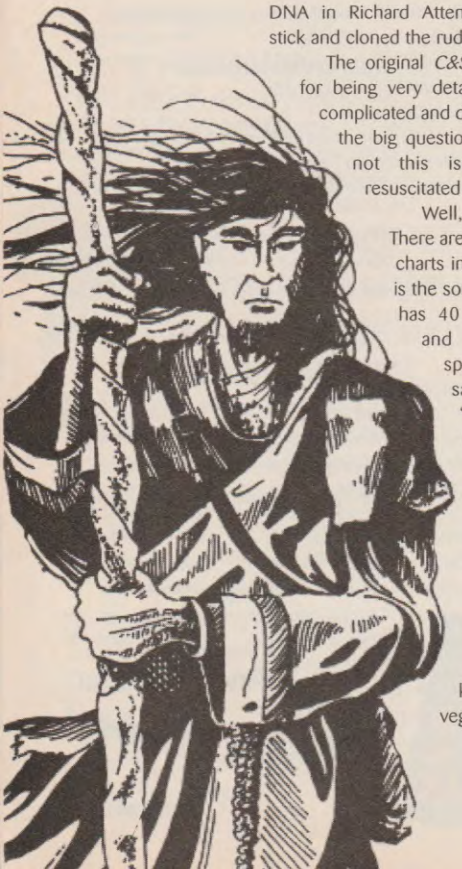
This isn't as bad as it sounds. There is a lot of information hidden away in these skill lists. The agricultural skills give you some idea about what a piece of land might be expected to produce in a season, and under 'poison making' there is a list of 15 types of poison, their ingredients and effects. The seven pages of prices and equipment lists carry this slightly to extremes – they not only distinguish four different sorts of spear, but tell you that you can get six duck eggs for a penny, but only four goose eggs. Pomegranates are three-pence ha'penny and rock-salts dearer than sea-salt. (Pomegranates give you 1 nutritional unit, and you need 12 a day but can get by on 6.) How have we run games all these years without someone to tell us these things?

So, yes, it is detailed, but is it complicated? Well, if you can add two-digit numbers together and understand percentages, there is nothing in this game which you will find difficult. The problem is not the rules themselves, but the sheer number of them. Magic, combat, drugs, healing, crafts – all have their own little charts and rules.

Most games don't expect you to roll during the character generation process to discover the social class and profession of your father, nor what relationship you have with him (are you a good son or a black sheep?). *C&S* contains nine charts dealing with this subject. However, the information that you get out of them – not merely that your father is a 'knight' but that he is a 'tenant in chief' or 'in the household troops of a baron' – serves to plug your character into the feudal world.

I would call this 'good complexity'.

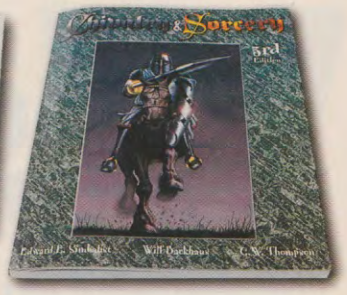
On the other hand, you have to look at two different tables to determine a character's height and weight, and then calculate his body levels (hit points) by dividing weight by 20 and adding constitution plus half strength. Does this really make the game more fun or rewarding than if we just rolled it on a D10? This is 'bad complexity', and *C&S* is full of it.



It's a different kinda magic

The *C&S* magic system was a great innovation at the time, because it felt more magical and realistic than 1st Edition *D&D*. Which, let's fact it, wouldn't be hard. It was very proud of the fact that magicians didn't gain spells by picking up experience points, but by spending long hours pouring over dusty tomes in their studies. Admittedly, to make this work, the player had to spend long hours pouring over the *C&S* rulebook – but the idea was a good one. The PCs' wizard puts down time (time not spent on adventures) to good use. This idea may well have influenced the authors of *Ars Magica*, whose wizards also spend a lot of time in their laboratories.

***C&S* is based around seven different 'modes' of magic, from Necromancers (very nasty) to Druids (quite nice). The druids are reasonably authentic Celtic priests, and the witches are herbalists and worshippers of the Earth Mother – the sort of people you'd expect to meet in health food shops. Whatever path they follow, high-level magicians will certainly have some powerful spells at their command – the Eighth Level 'great ward' is described as, "a massive protection against virtually anything".**



VITAL INFO

title:	*Chivalry & Sorcery 3rd Edition*
system:	a roleplaying game
price:	£13.99
publisher:	Highlander Designs
	001 516 744 4030
released:	out now
web site:	http://wildrose.net/C&S/C&S.htm

And the players said...

Roger: "A real nostalgia trip if you remember the old version."

Jeff: "I really like the detail about weapons, armour and combat."

Rich: "Half the skills I generate I'll never use – too many charts and dice. My brain hurts!"

Also available...

Atlas Games' *Ars Magica* is an evocation of the (fairly) historical Middle Ages, although its emphasis on magic means it might be hard work for the referee who wants to run a game concentrating on poultry farming. Chaosium's wonderful *Pendragon* takes a more romantic view of the period, where knights spend more time searching for Grails than worrying about the intricacies of the feudal system.

The Final Verdict

"*D&D* has survived for 20 years by adapting as the hobby progresses. *C&S* thinks that a marginally streamlined version of a game that was thought over-complex in 1978 is 'truly revolutionary'. It is wrong."

Andrew Rilstone

Score 5/10

Worse, there is no consistency about the numbers, so it's hard to hold the thing in your head. In *Star Wars* a 6D skill means you role six dice; in *Cthulhu* you succeed at your skill 60 by rolling under 60 on percentile dice. Intuitive, elegant, and you can explain it to a newcomer in a few seconds. In *C&S* you might buy 3 skill levels Poultry Raising (I swear I'm not making this up), which is a Difficulty Factor 3 skill. You check on the chart, which says that a skilled character has a 40 percent chance of succeeding at a DF3 skill. But because you have 3 levels of skill, you get to add your Personal Skill factor (3*3%=9). And Poultry Farming is an 'Intelligence + Wisdom', which means (according to another chart) that you can add another 6 percent, making 55 percent. Not actually difficult, but not what I would call smooth, intuitive and elegant, either.

So far I would say, 'you pays your groats, you takes your chance' – if you want the detail, you'll probably put up with the complexity; if you want simplicity, you'll lose the detail. But *C&S* has two more drastic failings.

In the first place it isn't at all clear what sort of game you are supposed to run with it. A lot of emphasis is placed on society – the character generation system (a straightforward 20-stage process) tells you whether you are the second son of a freehold stockbreeder or the bastard offspring of a master glass blower who was a syndic on the guild council. These classes and professions affect what skills and careers you can adopt – a serf can't become a knight, although he might be a forester. On the other hand, even if you become a wizard, the fact that your dad was a glass blower means you may remember some craft skills.

But when you actually get to chose your vocation, your choice is oddly familiar: warrior, mage, thief, clergy... Admittedly, the clergy are meant to be 'realistic' medieval priests, not *D&D* clerics. At low levels, they have sensible abilities such as 'say mass', but as they acquire experience, they sprout the ability to cure light wounds and heal disease.

Which leaves me asking what this game is for? If it's a game of *D&D* characters fighting monsters (kobolds and gnolls – not an authentic medieval bestiary in sight!) then why do we need rules for apple picking and poultry farming? If it is about the nuts and bolts of life in the Middle Ages, why are the vocations so adventurous?

Why, you say, don't you look in the referee's notes? This brings me to the game's second big failing: there aren't any. Character generation, combat, skills, weapons, equipment, spells – but hardly a word on how to run it. Apparently the forthcoming game master's handbook will tell us how to run a feudal campaign. In the 1970s it was quite common for RPGs to be collections of rules, with no real info about what to do with them. But *C&S 3rd Edition* was supposed (according to the introduction) to "bring a classic into the '90s".

I think that it has failed outright – what we have here is clearly a dated, first-generation product, and considering how much is left for the GM's guide, only half a system. However, I have to admit that I am looking forward to the second half.

"I think that it has failed outright – what we have here is clearly a dated, first-generation product."

Visions

The powers that be within Dominia surface once again to do battle. But have they over-stretched themselves this time?

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Magic gets a shake-up in the summer. Wizards of the Coast will release the Fifth Edition of the game, dropping a number of cards from the Fourth in the process. Can you guess which ones and make yourself some cash by selling on your soon-to-be-collectable rares?

Mirage changed *Magic* more than any prior expansion set – stand-alone or otherwise. As well as the controversial Phasing and Flanking rules, which added a new dimension to the game, albeit with more confusion over rulings, *Mirage* provided a way of out-doing decks built to traditional models. This made friendly play more enjoyable – because you had to 'rediscover' means of winning – and tournament play more challenging, with unpredictable decks appearing.

Visions, which is an expansion for *Mirage*, follows the same basic themes and many of the creature types reappear. When you read through a box-full of boosters (500 cards), you get the impression that this is a rounding-out of *Mirage*, rather than an attempt to develop the basic game of *Magic* – more of the same but not much new or different.

Is this a good thing? There are many cards which I immediately thought would fit well into my decks, both those composed of cards from the entire range of *Magic* expansions and those that have been constructed from *Mirage* cards alone. But in terms of what I believe an expansion set should offer, the answer is no. To my mind, an expansion should add a twist to the overall game and change, however subtly, the way that people play.

But before launching too far into such criticisms, let's first look at what *Visions* does offer, and examine the way in which it integrates into the *Mirage* set.

There are a number of cards which have an effect when a permanent – often a Land of a given type – is returned to its owner's hand. These generally have a low Mana cost for their given effect and can be played early, providing you don't mind doing without that extra Land for a turn. Similarly, there are cards which are Enchantments but which can be used as Instants if buried at the end of the turn. These can give you the element of surprise previously only possessed by players of Blue denial decks and those heavy with Instant direct damage.

There are also some great rare cards that will be sought after. Take, for example, the Archangel, a white 5/5 flyer that doesn't tap when attacking. It's a super-charged Serra Angel, though with the slightly higher casting cost of five generic Mana and two white. Another hit is likely to be green Summer Bloom. This one-off Sorcery enables you to play an additional *three* Lands in your turn for a mere one Generic and one Green Mana. Get this early in a fast Mana-producing deck – replete with Birds of Paradise, say – or use it with a Land Tax and you'd get a fast, high-powered and therefore extremely dangerous creature deck.

GAINING THE UPPER HAND

Want a whole bunch of tips on how to beat your *Magic* opponents? Then check out the book given away with this month's arcane. Not only do we present you with killer combos and pre-constructed decks, but you'll also find Britain's first fully-comprehensive and up-to-date *Magic* price guide.

"If you're a *Magic* addict you should buy *Visions* – you're going to get more of what you already like. But don't bother if you're a casual player."

Snake Basket
Artifact
Illus. Roger Raupp
Enchant Creature
If enchanted creature is put into any graveyard, that creature's controller loses an amount of life equal to its power and you gain an amount of life equal to its toughness.
"Watch death wait / Wait, death, watch / Steal breath swiftly / but steal life slowly."
—Suq'Ata dirge
Illus. Brian Horton
Goblin Recruiter
Goblin
Goblin Recruiter comes into
search your library for any
of Goblin cards. Reveal
cards to all players. Shuffle
brary, then put the cards on
our library in any order.
1/1
Mortal Wound
Creature
age is dealt to enchanted
re, destroy it.
tears spill over Jamuraa. Mixed
od, they wash everything red."
Love Song of Night and Day"

If you prefer to play more aggressively, then Black is superb in a *Mirage/Visions* deck. Imagine playing Desolation, an Enchantment, against a White deck, especially where you have non-Land means of generating Mana – 'At the end of each turn, each player who tapped for Mana during that turn sacrifices a Land. If a Plains is sacrificed in that way, Desolation deals 2 damage to that player'. It's like a Psychic Venom with a kick.

Red doesn't do too badly either, with cards such as Heat Wave, an Enchantment which stops Blue creatures from blocking your attackers with no side-effects and non-Blue creatures from blocking you, unless their controller is willing to pay one life for each blocking creature. Attack *en masse* even with small creatures and you're sure to do decent damage.

As with *Mirage,* the artwork here is, almost without exception, absolutely superb. The work of outstanding Brit Ian Miller appears again and he has even designed the 'V' in the logo. There's also more good stuff from Terese Nielson and Pete Ventners. The flavour of the art, which portrays the African influence in the *Mirage* and *Visions* sets, is spot-on, and Wizards can again be proud of its artists.

So, another great expansion? Yes, when you look at individual cards and the quality of the artwork, but *Visions* doesn't have its own identity, its own distinct feel, nor its own style of play. The common cards in the set are, for the most part, pretty ordinary, being tweaked versions of cards we've played with already. And while there are 'must have' cards here, there aren't enough to really make you want to invest heavily in *Visions* boosters. It would be better to try to hunt down individual cards on the secondary market. This wouldn't be Wizard's view but makes more sense in the long run.

The implicit question is: how many more expansions can there be for *Magic* before it either runs out of new cards, or those cards are all either re-hashes or gimmicks?

The new rules of Phasing and Flanking were introduced in the *Mirage* set and it's unlikely that adding more rules won't produce further levels of complexity to what is already a pretty complex game.

If you're a *Magic* addict, you should buy *Visions* – you're going to get more of what you already like. But don't bother if you're a casual player who's looking to spice up or significantly change the game. *Mirage* had this kind of edge, but *Visions* sadly lacks it.

VITAL INFO

title: *Visions*

system: an expansion set for *Magic: The Gathering*

price: 15-card booster pack £2.25

publisher: Wizards of the Coast

0345 125599

released: out now

web site: http://wotc.ukonline.co.uk

also available...

There have, of course, been many previous expansion sets for *Magic: The Gathering.* Of the recent bunch, we reckon you should seek out *Aliances* cards, as well as those from the more recent *Mirage* collection.

The Final Verdict

"Despite having the same, high-quality artwork boasted by the *Mirage* expansion, and despite being set in the same area of *Dominia, Visions* fails to live up to the playability of *Mirage.* It has some real gem cards thrown into the mix but the set as a whole fails to alter the game in any way and, to my mind, that's just what an expansion should do."

Paul Pettengale

Score 7/10

A close look at *visions*

More cards for you to hunt down at all costs – here are some of the picks of the *Visions* expansion...

Dream Tides
Enchantment
Creatures do not untap during their controllers' untap phase.
Each nongreen creature's controller may pay an additional 2 during his or her upkeep to untap that creature.

This is one of those essential cards for the creatureless deck. It's pretty cheap for the great effect.

Anvil of Bogardan
Artifact
Each player skips his or her discard phase.
During each player's draw phase, that player draws an additional card and then chooses and discards a card.

Use this with a Library of Leng to never have to throw away and to ensure you keep the best cards.

Wand of Denial
Artifact
: Look at the top card of target player's library. If that card is a nonland card, you may pay 2 life to put it into that player's graveyard.
You'll never miss what you never had.

Another useful card in a creatureless deck – bury opponent's creatures when needed.

Equipoise
During your upkeep, for each land target player controls in excess of the number of lands you control, target land he or she controls phases out. Repeat this process for artifacts and then for creatures.

Similar to Balance, use this card to ensure that your opponent doesn't get the upper hand.

Katabatic Winds
Enchantment
Phasing
Creatures with flying cannot attack, block, or use any ability that includes in the activation cost.
Wind will win, whatever we wish.

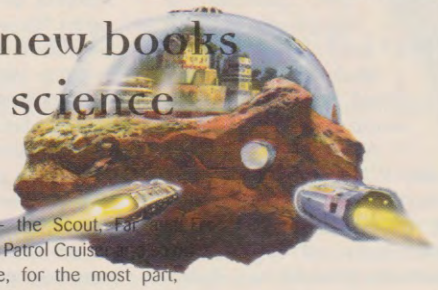
True, it's hampered by Phasing, but against a flock of Serras it could be extremely useful.

Necrosavant
Summon Necrosavant
, Sacrifice a creature: Put Necrosavant into play. Use this ability only during your upkeep and only if Necrosavant is in your graveyard.
"Ah, I remember my first death."
—Zarkuu, necrosavant
5/5

Use with a creature such as Spiny Starfish to make Necrosavant immortal for minimal cost.

Traveller

Not one, not two, but *three* new books for the latest version of the science fiction classic.



SETTING THE SCENE
Both the *Starships* and *Central Supply Catalogue* books are designed for use in the Milieu 0 setting. The two sourcebooks that detail this setting, *Milieu 0* and *First Survey*, are due to be released within the next fortnight.

When Imperium Games released the Fourth Edition of the *Traveller* rules last August, it already had an impressive line-up of supplements and sourcebooks in the works. Unfortunately, due to various problems and changes at the company, the release schedule for the second half of last year was held up.

Now, however, things are back on track and Imperium is racing to catch up. The result is the release of no less than three new books for *Traveller*. All of these are aimed mainly at campaigns in the Milieu 0 setting, at the very start of the Third Imperium.

GIVE ME DETAIL
Those players looking for more detailed starship and vehicle rules will have to wait until June, when a new edition of *Fire, Fusion and Steel* is planned. As with the original, the book will contain complete design rules for any vehicle and weapon system.

Starships

The first of the new releases, *Starships* is split into three sections – The Imperial Calendar, which takes up only two pages, Universal Ship Profiles, and The Standard Ship Design System.

The Universal Ship Profiles section takes up the bulk of the book and describes 30 of the most common military and civilian spacecraft in use in the Milieu 0 setting. Each ship comes complete with statistics, a short description, a Chris Foss illustration and a deck plan.

Although the vast majority of these ships are based on designs that will be familiar to any experienced *Traveller* player – the Scout, Far Trader, Patrol Cruiser – they are, for the most part, lower technology versions. Not only does this mean that some of their statistics are different, it's also been used as an excuse to make them look different. To be honest, while a couple of the new versions are more appealing, it's a shame that Imperium has decided to make a break away from the much-loved original versions.

By far the worst part, though, are the deck plans for each ship. Rather than the detailed, professional-looking blueprints that you might have hoped for, they're simply awful. All the plans are poorly presented and singularly uninspiring, but to make matters worse, many are actually wrong. The Secure Trader, for example, is described both in its statistics and the notes about the design as having eight large staterooms and nine small ones. The deck plan, however, only shows five of the former and four of the latter. Such errors are simply inexcusable.

Luckily, things do pick up slightly with the last section, which details the Standard Ship Design System. While quick and easy to use, the QSD System included in the basic rulebook is very limited. The SSD System, on the other hand, allows for ships to be designed from a wider range of standardised components. While still not allowing for truly 'custom' ship designs, it does offer far more flexibility and choice, at the cost of slightly increased complexity.

In all, the *Starships* book is a disappointment. While what is included will be useful for any *Traveller* referee, the book feels very information-light, mainly because of the two pages dedicated to each ship design, one and a half are taken up by the illustration and the painfully awful deck plans. Depending on whether you like the new Chris Foss visual designs or not, that means that 30 or 45 pages out of 108 are effectively wasted space.

Aliens Archive

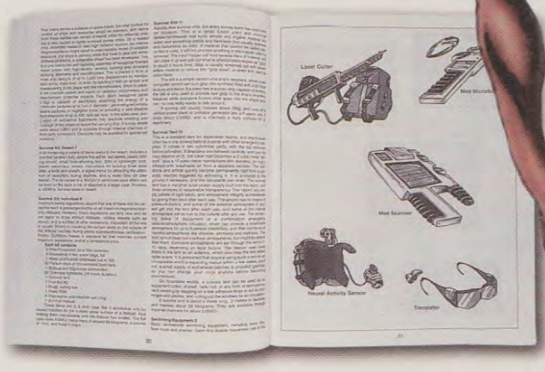
A lot more promising than the unimpressive *Starships* book, the *Aliens Archive* presents full details of 12 alien races for use in any *Traveller* campaign, either as player characters or NPCs, regardless of time period. All the races fall under the 'Minor' classification – that is, they had not developed Jump Drive independently before being contacted by the Imperium – and so the referee can place their homeworlds wherever he or she wishes.

REAL IDEAS
Referees seeking inspiration for a non-Imperial campaign setting for *Traveller* should check out *The Reality Disfunction* by British author Peter Hamilton.

Central Supply Catalogue

This is the last of the new batch of books for *Traveller,* the first half of which is made up of an equipment listing for the game, supplementing the rather short list in the basic rules. It also features notes concerning commerce, a chapter on vehicles and both vehicle and (simple) robot design rules. The book is aimed at Milieu 0 campaigns.

The *Central Supply Catalogue* is split into a number of chapters, each dealing with a specific subject. The first covers equipment available through Imperial Surplus Services, consisting mainly of military gear that has been phased out and replaced by higher technology items. This chapter serves both as a list of equipment that civilian characters can legally own and as a source of trading goods for any merchant players in your game.



The next four chapters – Protective Gear, Exploration Tools, Personal Mobility and Commercial Goods – describe a wide range of equipment available within and without the newly-formed Third Imperium. Each item is fully described, and there are boxed sections offering relevant new rules. The Protective Gear chapter, for example, includes sections covering both hot and cold environments, while the Commercial Goods chapter includes notes on robots. Much of the equipment here has been taken from previous editions of *Traveller* and has been updated for the new system, but there's also a fair amount of new stuff.

The last chapter, which takes up the second half of the book, presents a complete vehicle design system. Similar in basic form to the SSDS starship design rules in the *Starships* book, the system strikes a fair balance between simplicity and flexibility. It's not as exhaustive or as wide-ranging as the *Fire, Fusion and Steel* book for *Traveller: The New Era,* but neither is it as likely to make your brain explode. The chapter closes with notes about vehicle combat, heavy weapons, repairs and maintenance, and also includes a selection of new vehicles of various Tech levels.

In the long term, the *Central Supply Catalogue* will probably be the most useful of these new *Traveller* books. Uninspiring as equipment lists are, players will always want neat toys to play with and things to drive or fly around in. You'd be forgiven, though, for thinking that a lot of this material really should have been in the basic rules. In addition, there are some aspects of the technology that might strike you as irregular. Space suit technology, for example, seems to have regressed in the new edition of *Traveller,* with even TL 12 suits being large, bulky and unwieldy. Of course, this is more a matter of your own views on technology than anything else, and no single vision of *Traveller* is ever going to be perfect for every player.

Each of the alien races has its own chapter in the book and each follows the same format. First you are provided with a brief description of the race, then a discussion of its origins. This is followed by a section covering the race's physiology, split into sections such as Body Composition, Skeleton, Skin, Musculature, Locomotion, Senses and Reproduction. Some races have also been afforded additional sections dealing with any peculiarities of their physiology.

With the physical aspects covered, the psychology of the race is detailed, with a brief summation followed by a look at the race's key psychological traits. The race's homeworld, history and society is then discussed. This is followed by character generation and roleplaying notes. Finally, two example encounters are included for each alien species – one in Imperial space, the other on the alien's homeworld. These act as examples of how the aliens would be likely to behave in different situations.

The 12 species covered in the *Aliens Archive* offer an impressive degree of variety, from the once-human Bye-Ren mutated by generations of living on a high gravity world to the tree-like Hresh. It's obvious that all of the aliens presented here have been given a great deal of thought and a real effort has been made to avoid the usual stereotypes that are the bane of much stock science fiction.

On the downside, some of the biological and evolutionary details are somewhat shaky, to say the least, and several of the skeletal diagrams make very little anatomical sense. However, at least some thought has gone into this aspect of each race – one of the things that has always made *Traveller* stand out from most science fiction roleplaying games – and unless you happen to have a biology graduate amongst your players, the problems are likely to be minimal.

The only other thing that's slightly curious is the lack of specific rules for each race. Although details are given for psionics and using human equipment and vehicles, very little attention is paid to the race's physiology. The Bye-Ren, for example, are described as being effectively twice as strong as a normal human. However, they still roll 2D6 for attributes and their maximum strength remains 15, the same as a human.

Despite these niggles, though, *Aliens Archive* remains an interesting, thought-provoking and very useful book for any *Traveller* referee. It's far from perfect, but it is good stuff nonetheless.

"All of the aliens have been given a great deal of thought and a real effort has been made to avoid the usual stereotypes that are the bane of much science fiction."

VITAL INFO

title:	*Starships, Aliens Archive* and *Central Supply Catalogue*
system:	three sourcebooks for *Traveller*
price:	£14.95 each
publisher:	Imperium Games
	001 310 275 9934
released:	out now
e-mail:	imperiumgames@imperiumgames.com
web site:	http://www.imperiumgames.com/

Also available...

Simply put, there isn't really anywhere to look other than supplements for previous editions of *Traveller,* all of which are out of print and only available second-hand. An enterprising referee with access to these old books will certainly be able to convert many of the original ship designs and much of the equipment to the new edition, however.

The Final Verdict

"Something of a mixed bag – the first three releases for the new edition of *Traveller* vary considerably in quality and value. The fact that all the books seem to have been produced fairly cheaply doesn't help either. Nonetheless, the *Aliens Archive* and *Central Supply Catalogue* are both useful and promise much for future releases. You may find yourself buying *Starships* simply for the design rules, but be prepared to be disappointed with the rest of the book."

Andy Butcher

Starships	4/10
Aliens Archive	8/10
Central Supply Catalogue	6/10

COMING SOON IN...

TOTAL FILM

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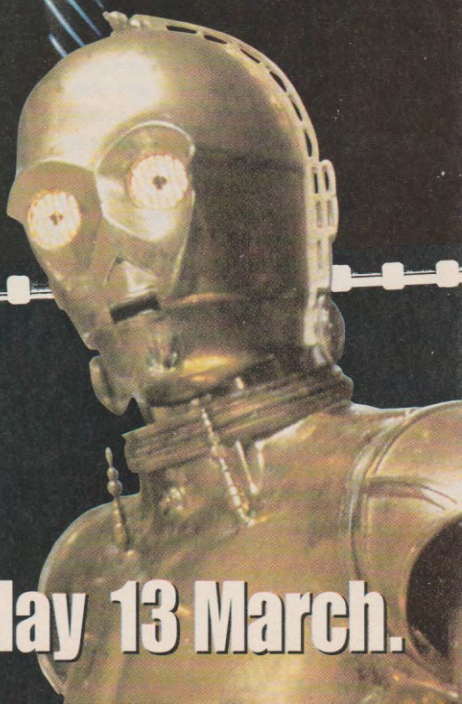
The complete script – utterly free!

FEATURING

"If you're part of a crew, nobody tells you that they're going to kill you... Your murderers come with smiles. They come as your friend."

...and plenty more coke-sniffing, helicopter-spotting, spaghetti-cooking, barman-plugging, high-life-living classics.



PLUS!

In Issue 3 itself: Prison movies!
The new-look *Star Wars*!
Al Pacino reverts to full-on gangster mode for *Donnie Brasco*!

It's all in Total Film 3. On sale Thursday 13 March.

Arcadia: King Ironheart's Madness

If you liked *Arcadia: The Wyld Hunt* then you'll like this, because it is basically the same game – a simple adventure in the style of *Mystic Wood* but sold in CCG-style boosters. The artwork is lovely, the background is engaging and the pop-up character cards are wonderfully designed. Best of all, each player needs only one character pack and one story pack to give it a go.

King Ironheart's Madness is set in a different realm of Arcadia and the new plot involves thwarting the spread of Mechopolis – Mad King Ironheart's nightmare city of iron, inhabited by mechanical monstrosities, which is destroying the countryside. There are different character types, including renegade Cogs, and new city-based land. Existing characters can be brought forward although, because these quests are harder than previous ones, new starting characters are more powerful than those from the first set. Tests now involve rolling two dice instead of one and winning players gain more experience.

The rules for both *Arcadia* sets are compatible, despite the minor changes mentioned above and some slight rewording for clarity. Nevertheless, the game could still do with a more in-depth rulebook – the reprinted rules are actually in an even smaller type size than the first ones. Other drawbacks of the original game are also still present. Some cards are unclearly worded and there is a problem with game balance. It can be tedious if you get stuck in a situation where none of the players can pass a particularly difficult waylay.

However, *King Ironheart's Madness* does contain my personal choice for Card of the Month: Mr Briefcase, human Magician – Mr Briefcase has all the cards!

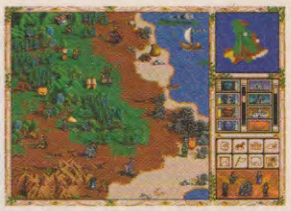
Lucya Szachnowski Score 6/10

Arcadia: King Ironheart's Madness
A stand-alone expansion set for *Arcadia*
15-card Story Packs and Character Packs
£1.75
White Wolf
001 404 292 1819
Out now

Heroes of Might & Magic 2

Together with the excellent *Warcraft II* (**arcane** 8), *Heroes of Might & Magic* (**arcane** 1) ranked as one of the best fantasy strategy games to be released for the PC. The good news is that *Heroes of Might & Magic 2* is even better.

Structurally, the sequel is very similar to its predecessor. Your aim is to dominate a fantasy land through force of arms and magic. To do so you must capture and control towns, which in turn allows you to produce a variety of different types of unit. These units are then organised into armies led by a heroic character, who gradually increases in level and experience, gaining a variety of skills and spells.



Heroes of Might & Magic 2
A fantasy strategy game for the PC
£44.99
New World Computing
0181 296 1953
Out now

Rather than a radically new game, *Heroes of Might & Magic 2* is more of a revised edition. Just about every aspect of the game has been polished, updated and added to in some way or another. There are more character classes, more monsters and unit types, more spells, more towns, new victory conditions, an expanded campaign, a vast array of new maps to play across, and dozens of new features. To top it all off, the computer opponents have been significantly improved, and now present a real challenge in both strategic and tactical terms.

If you were hoping for something really different then it has to be said that *Heroes of Might & Magic 2* may be something of a disappointment. On the other hand, if you enjoyed the original this sequel will prove even more challenging and fun to play, and if you have never encountered *Heroes of Might & Magic*, there's a real treat in store for you in this game.

Andy Butcher Score 7/10

Dreamspeakers Tradition Book

Friends of spirits and speakers with dreams, *Mage's* shamans finally get some attention.

The Dreamspeakers are a cliché. There's no other word for it. The way the varying shamanistic cultures have been casually thrown together for the two-page description of the Tradition in the *Mage: The Ascension* rulebook leaves scope for nothing else. How could such a short piece of writing give voice to the native cultures of the Americas, Australia and Africa?

Well, of course, it didn't. Now this little book, on the other hand, throws itself into the task with gusto and honesty. It even admits that the basic description is a shallow compromise, and attributes it to the incomprehension of the rest of the Council of Nine.

From there onwards the authors, Nicky Rea and Jackie Cassandra, weave a picture of the modern Tradition that mixes established *Mage* history and oodles of cultural detail. Each of the different shamanistic societies is examined, and the differences and similarities pulled out.

Other books in this series have done this equally well – *Celestial Chorus*, for instance. But where it fell down is where *Dreamspeakers* excels. Those traditional ideas are seamlessly translated into something usable in modern game terms.

The Dreamspeakers take a fundamentally different approach to their magick than do the other Traditions. They see it as medicine, a healing, nurturing thing. They disdain the wielders of magick, seeing them as nothing more than power-crazed sorcerers. And while the other traditions fight for ascension, the Dreamspeakers fight for the restoration of the land ravaged by centuries of European colonialism.

Don't let that make you think the book is overtly political – it isn't, but there's something of an undercurrent to it, including some references to current real world events. It's no bad thing because it helps provide potential motivations for Dreamspeaker characters.

The modern organisation and attitudes of the tradition are clearly presented. The character templates and magical techniques common to the series are also present and correct.

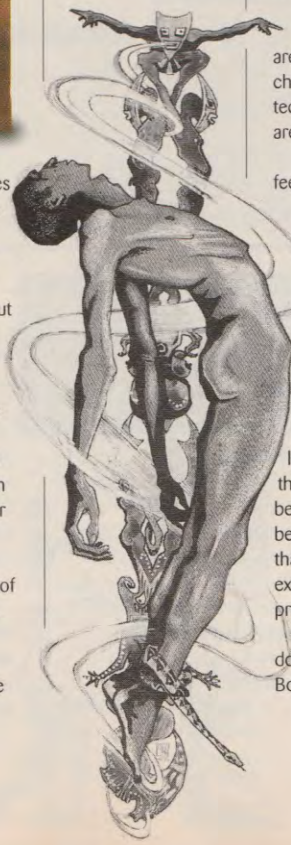
All these parts give a unique feel to the Tradition, and the art is a considerable aid in this task. It shows an unusual degree of consistency for a White Wolf product, and adds to the atmosphere.

Criticism? Well, while each Tradition Book seems to have packed in more info than the last, the material here is so interesting that you want to learn even more. But given that the stated aim of the series is to be small, low-cost books, it would be churlish of me to make much of that. And anyway, there's an excellent further reading list provided in the back.

Dreamspeakers is without doubt the best of the Tradition Books to date.

Adam Tinworth Score 9/10

VITAL INFO
A sourcebook for *Mage: The Ascension*
£5.99
White Wolf
001 404 292 1819
Out now
http://www.white-wolf.com



First Strike!

Thank god, a game which caters for all the fledgling Mechwarriors, instead of the veterans. *First Strike!* is designed for use by players who only own the *BattleTech 4th Edition* boxed set instead of a small cupboard full of boxed sets and sourcebooks. Targeted at the first-time player, this scenario book provides a guide to Mech warfare and tactics, plus an overview of the capabilities of the BattleMechs available to the player.

First Strike!
A scenario book for *BattleTech 4th Edition*
£6.99
FASA
001 312 243 5660
Out now

The scenarios themselves (nine in all) provide an excellent variety of

Forbidden Lore: Technology

Branded as sinful evil by the church, science and technology may still be the only hope for the universe of *Fading Suns*...

In the decaying universe of the *Fading Suns* roleplaying game from Holistic Design (**arcane** 11), science has become an all but forbidden art. During the days of the Second Republic technology advanced at an incredible pace, performing wonders unheard of before or since, but eventually outrunning the ability of humanity to keep up with it. Now technology is proscribed by an alliance between the Noble Houses and the Church, both groups seeing education and science as the surest threat to their continued rule over the masses of serfs.

Forbidden Lore: Technology is a sourcebook for *Fading Suns* which takes a closer look at the state of science and technology in the Known Worlds. As well as providing new equipment for players and refs to use in their games, it also examines the reasons that technology is in decline and the attitudes held towards it. In addition there are new rules, including details of starship combat and pursuit, one of the notable omissions from the main rules.

Physically the book is split into chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of technology in the Known Worlds. After a prologue (which takes the form of another letter from Alustro) and an introduction which defines some of the key elements of science and technology in *Fading Suns*, there are six chapters and an appendix.

VITAL INFO

A sourcebook for *Fading Suns*
£12.99
Holistic Design
001 770 934 9131
Out now
hdi@mindspring.com
http://www.holistic-design.com/

The first, Theory and Practise, presents an overview of technology and economics in the Known Worlds. Chapter two, Tools, covers the gear available to serfs and peasants, looks at the many war machines used by different Noble Houses, and includes rules for vehicle combat. The third chapter, Man and Machine, examines cybernetics, think machines (computers) and golems (robots). There's also a new system for characters wishing to purchase cybernetics during character creation that replaces the somewhat confusing rules in the main *Fading Suns* book.

The fourth chapter is perhaps the most important, dealing with spaceships and space travel. As well as a variety of common ships and equipment (including space suits and ships weaponry), there are rules for space combat and gaining a spacecraft during character creation. There are also discussions on using ships in the game, and spacecraft economics.

The fifth chapter, Weird Tech, includes notes of a wide variety of items and equipment that don't fit anywhere else in the book. As well as psychic equipment and Church relics, there are examples of alien items made by the Vau and Symbiots.

Finally, the last chapter takes a closer look at Church Law and its attitudes towards technology, followed by the appendix which presents rules for a new type of character, the Church Preceptors – a sect of scientists and teachers dedicated to re-educating the people of the Known Worlds.

Forbidden Lore: Technology is another good book for this promising system. The starships chapter alone makes it worthwhile for most refs, but all of the info contained here is useful stuff that's likely to be handy for any group.

Andy Butcher
Score 7/10

combat environments and missions, and include a three-part mini-campaign to give the player a taste of battlefield attrition. All are laid out in a clear fashion with well-defined victory conditions and special rules.

Next there are three scenarios designed for *CityTech 2nd Edition*, introducing urban combat, conventional forces and, of course, The Clans. For most new players, *CityTech* is a natural progression from the basic boxed set and *First Strike!* caters for this well.

Finally, a scenario generator is provided allowing players to create their own scenarios based on the products and information they have.

Nemesis: The Wizardry Adventure
An adventure game for the PC
£44.99
Sirtech/Virgin
0171 368 2255
Out now

Nemesis: The Wizardry Adventure

The Wizardry series from Sirtech was one of the pioneers of the computer roleplaying game, and proved immensely popular with gamers everywhere. For some time, though, Sirtech has concentrated on other styles and genres of games. Only now, several years after the last Wizardry game, has the company returned to the series with this brand new adventure.

Nemesis is one of those curious beasts, an attempt to blend a variety of styles and genres of game into a seamless whole. In theory this is a great idea – take the best parts from a range of games and combine them, and you should end up with something far greater than the sum of its parts.

Unfortunately, the idea has been tried before, and seldom has it worked very well. *Nemesis* is a valiant attempt to mix traditional roleplaying with graphic adventure and 'interactive movie' elements, and it has to be said that it's better in many ways than you might expect. For the most part you play from a first-person perspective, with switches into third-person animated sequences at key moments. Likewise, the gameplay itself combines skill-based combat and magic with a wide variety of puzzles and logic problems.

Unfortunately, *Nemesis* suffers in two key areas. The first is speed – unless you have a fast PC with an equally impressive CD-ROM drive, and the space to install a lot of the game on your hard disk, *Nemesis* can be painfully slow to play, which completely ruins the carefully-crafted visuals. Perhaps more importantly, though, the game's puzzles are in the graphic adventure style – objects have to be used at the right location in the right manner to progress. If these kind of games are your thing, you'll certainly like *Nemesis*. Those gamers who prefer a little more flexibility and freedom, though, will be a tad disappointed.

Andy Butcher Score 5/10

This is an excellent idea, one I'm surprised FASA didn't think of sooner. *First Strike!* is quite a good game, and although experienced players will find the missions easy, it introduces new concepts gradually for novice players acting as an excellent tutorial. If you're new to *BattleTech* buy this book. If you're a veteran forget it – there's nothing here you don't know.

Alex Bund Score 6/10

Throal Adventures

A collection of three adventures for *Earthdawn* characters of 3rd to 6th circle of experience, *Throal Adventures* continues FASA's routine of releasing a sourcebook for *Earthdawn* and then a separate book of adventures related to it. In this case, *Throal Adventures* is a complementary volume to the *Throal: The Dwarf Kingdom* sourcebook (**arcane** 12). Although it would be possible to run these scenarios without the *Throal* book, it does make life a great deal easier.

Throal Adventures
A collection of scenarios for *Earthdaw*
£8.99
FASA
001 312 243 566
Out now

Because there are only three adventures in the book, each is of a fairly decent length, and for the most part fully fleshed out with all the information you need to run them straight out of the book. Purloined Provisions sees the characters hired to protect a merchant caravan as it travels through the caverns beneath Throal, only to end up searching for the source of an underground river. In the second adventure, Deep Trouble, the players are hired to investigate

mysterious rumbling noises originating in the ancient tunnels beneath the subterranean city of Hustane, and end up caught in the politics of Throal's nobility. Finally, The Way Out sees the characters exploring the routes beneath the mountains once more, this time searching for a connection with the Serpent River.

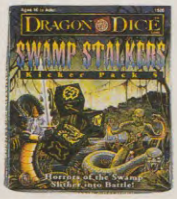
All three adventures are fairly straightforward and a touch linear, but all have at least one interesting twist which raises them above the typical 'crawl through underground' passages. With a little work from an enterprising referee any one of them could end up providing some memorable sessions of play. The only real problem with the adventures is apparent when you look at them together – all three involve the players exploring the tunnels and caverns beneath Throal, and so they're not well-suited to being run one after the other. Interspersed into an on-going campaign, though, the stories in *Throal Adventures* will provide a lot of enjoyment.

Andy Butcher Score 7/10

Swamp Stalkers

The first three things immediately noticeable about this expansion for *Dragon Dice* is the drop in price (down £1), the bright green and yellow colouring, and the clarity of the icons. All an improvement on the previous Kicker Packs and no doubt instigated by the *Magestorm* set. It's okay having good value for money, but are Swamp Stalkers good value for your army?

Swamp Stalkers use eco-conscious Green and devastatingly deadly Black magic, introducing the powerful Black Rain and Bloodlust spells which respectively halve save results in a chosen area and cause opposition units to attack themselves.



Swamp Stalkers
An expansion set for *Dragon Dice*
£3.99
TSR
01223 212517
Out now

The main reason for including Swamp Stalkers in your army, though, has to be their ability to mutate. This allows you, on your turn, to target up to 3 health points of opposition troops for each of your armies that contain a Swamp Stalker unit, killing all that don't save and replacing the lost values into your army from a promotional pool – this being a dedicated set of Swamp Stalker reserves that cannot be attacked until they join the fight and do not cost you any building point cost. With this ability, Swamp Stalkers also utilise Poison, Smother and Coil mêlée attacks, all of which allow saving throws but have Smother killing outright and Poison allowing a second saving throw, thus prolonging the moment of the unit's death.

My view is that *Dragon Dice* has almost run its natural course because the designers appear to be running out of ideas for different effects, or at least effects that cause interesting possibilities. Each Kicker Pack now seems to be aimed at quietening the specialities of the previous one, and rather than keeping the gameplay short, fast and simple, player's armies are becoming greater in volume to allow for the character and monster combinations from each set to be included.

Chris Baylis Score 5/10

Earthdawn Survival Guide

Earthdawn Survival Guide
A sourcebook for *Earthdawn*
£9.99
FASA
001 312 243 5660
Out now

A companion volume to the *Explorer's Guide to Barsaive*, this is a sourcebook for FASA's fantasy roleplaying game which explores the dangers that may face players in their travels across the land of Barsaive.

The *Survival Guide* is split into two main sections. The first deals with the subjects covered in the form of letters, journal entries and stories from a wide range of scholars, explorers and adventurers. The second section presents rules for dealing with them.

The first section is split into chapters dealing with different forms of travel and areas of Barsaive. The first deals with travel in general, then come chapters on the Wilds, covering mountains, jungles, forests and ruins, and then Underground Exploration, which includes notes on Kaers, Places of Legend and Peril – this looks at the Badlands, Death's Sea, the Mist Swamps and the Wastes. Finally there's a chapter on healing and injury, which covers a wide range of subjects, including herbs, poisons and disease.

The rules section runs through the specifics of each chapter in game terms. There is a range of new rules, as well as discussions of their impact on gaming and adventure ideas.

The *Earthdawn Survival Guide* is another well-designed and written sourcebook for *Earthdawn*. The only problem with it lies in the subjects it covers. Whether or not this book will prove useful to your gaming depends on the style of your campaigns. Referees running a heroic, high-fantasy game where the emphasis is on adventure and cinematic action may find their games will become bogged down in the detail presented here. On the other hand, if you prefer a gritty, nastier style of game that pays more attention to the hazards of life in a fantasy world, the *Survival Guide* will be a valuable resource.

Andy Butcher Score 6/10

Explorer Corps

Tired of the hun-drum life of a MechWarrior? Looking for something more? Then join the Explorer Corps.

As a major campaign sourcebook for *BattleTech* and *MechWarrior*, *Explorer Corps* offers an alternative style of game to the common mercenary campaign. The Explorer Corps were founded by ComStar during the turbulent years following the Exodus carried out by the Star League Defence Force. Their mission is to boldly go where no man has gone before… well, something like that anyway. As their name implies, the Explorers act as surveyors and scouts, moving out into deep space in search of an uncharted world, and more importantly in search of the Clan homeworlds.

Beginning with the formation and the early history of the unit, the sourcebook goes on to detail the modern face of the Corps – its organisation, resources and major installations. All of this is ideal as a background for campaigns, especially the detailed discussions of procedures and protocols covering everything from surveys to combat. As is standard for *BattleTech* sourcebooks, a number of major personalities are included giving the referee ready-made mentors and commanders for his players.

The next section of the book is huge, discussing the specifics of life in space. The depth of these essays should give even the most demanding referee the info he needs during a game. Discussing everything from warfare and communications to hyperspace and evacuation, the sourcebook really gives you a feeling for spaceborn adventure. Included are detailed overviews of both dropship and jumpship design and their systems, along with deckplans.

The occupants of deep space are discussed next. No aliens I'm afraid, but plenty of lost colonies, pirates and somewhere out there The Clans. While the Explorer Corps may be a scout force, it is fully armed and ready for engagement. The gazetteer gives a good report for the ref regarding the factions operating towards the galactic core, including known Clan facilities.

The rest of the book is rules and campaign generation, and like the background I don't think anything has been overlooked. Starting with an invaluable glossary sheet, the rules detail advanced terrain and weather conditions for those uncharted worlds, shipboard combat and boarding actions, and an extensive star system generator – a useful feature for normal *BattleTech* games as well. Next is a huge chunk of new rules for *BattleSpace* – ramming, detection, pirate jump-points and some neat new kit. With these new rules, *Explorer Corps* is definitely integrated into the whole *BattleTech* system. Rules regarding employment and contracts are provided with a number of starting contracts for the players to get their teeth into.

With all of this information, *Explorer Corps* should shed a new light on *BattleTech*. The Explorers provide opportunity for everything from MechWarrior ground action to major space battles, and beyond. An excellent addition to the *BattleTech* range.

Alex Bund Score 8/10

VITAL INFO
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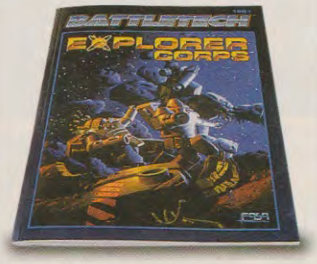
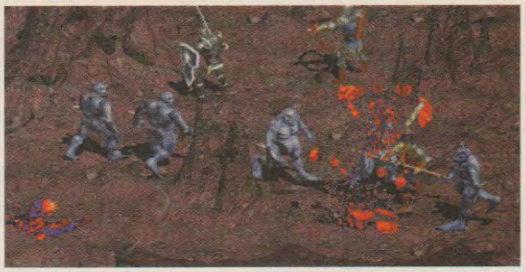


Diablo

save a town from an ancient evil in the latest pc game from blizzard.



When Blizzard Entertainment, the company responsible for the excellent *Warcraft II* fantasy strategy game (**arcane** 8), announced it was developing a fantasy roleplaying game, expectations were high. Now *Diablo* has arrived, and jolly good it is too – although not quite in the way that we expected.

Diablo casts you as a lone hero who has travelled to a kingdom all but destroyed by evil forces. Upon reaching the central town of the area, you discover it in ruins, with only a few hardy souls still in residence. The local church, once dedicated to the service of good, has been corrupted by dark powers. Monsters of all types periodically emerge from the catacombs beneath the building and terrorise the town.

Being a heroic type, you resolve to defeat the evil and save the town. As you work your way down through the levels beneath the church you are set a number of quests to complete. Eventually, on the lowest level, you must face and defeat Diablo himself, one of the three great Princes of Hell.

The first thing you realise upon playing *Diablo,* and the thing to bear in mind before buying it, is that despite the many roleplaying elements to be found in the game, this is not a roleplaying game per se. In many ways, *Diablo* is a direct descendant of the successful fantasy arcade game, *Gauntlet.*

In the game you can choose from one of three character classes – Warrior, Rogue or Sorcerer. Beginning at level 1, you work your way through the levels of the dungeon, slaughtering monsters by the dozen with sword, spell and arrow. As you gain experience you rise in levels, which enables you to increase your attributes – Magic, Strength, Dexterity and Vitality – and gain money to buy better equipment and spells, as well as collecting weapons, armour and other stuff from defeated enemies.

It might not be the most complex computer 'roleplaying' game ever, but the fact is that *Diablo* is great fun. The graphics, sound and presentation are all top-notch. Your character alone has hundreds of frames of animation, and some of the monsters are awesome. The control system is simple and intuitive, making it easy to wade through the hordes of monsters and hack them to bits.

Diablo randomly generates all 16 levels of the dungeon every time you start a new game. Combined with the different strategies required by the different character classes, this makes it one of the most re-playable PC games ever.

Combine all this with the option to play multi-player over a network or via the Internet and you have a superb game. In terms of design it may be little more than a third-person perspective version of *Doom* with character development, but that doesn't stop *Diablo* from being great fun.

Andy Butcher Score 8/10

VITAL INFO

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Heavy Gear Southern Army List One

The first of a new series of supplements for Dream Pod 9's *Heavy Gear* tactical/roleplaying system, *Southern Army List One* is dedicated to coverage of the largest military force on the planet Terra Nova, the Southern Republic Army. Unlike the previous unit and army lists in other *Heavy Gear* books, this supplement concentrates completely on the South, its politics and its soldiery.

As usual, the production quality is up to DP9's fine standard, visually engaging and well illustrated, combined with a strong mix of 'theme' material and background information. The bulk of the book is taken up by the latter, broken into several chapters covering all aspects of the land army and the Southern Republic cities it defends. The remainder of the supplement is filled out with a referee's section. Life as a ground-pounder or *Heavy Gear* pilot in the SRA is covered in great detail, with information on training, the ranks system, military doctrine and tables of organisation and equipment. Everything from unit patches, rank pips, medals and uniform styles are featured. As we've seen before in other *Heavy Gear* books, typical regiments are profiled (14 in all) in extremely fine detail (down to unit colour trims and regimental sigils). The referee's chapter features a handful of tactical scenarios and adventure seeds and, as well as the typical set of stock and VIP NPCs, four new Gears, a hovertank and a Strider are also given game stats and record sheets.

The usefulness of the *Southern Army List One* is up to the individual referee – it's certainly not exhaustive, failing as it does to cover the Southern Republics' naval, Landship or aerospace forces (to be provided in List Two perhaps?) – but nevertheless it's invaluable to anyone running a campaign based in the South, as well as any *Heavy Gear* completists out there.

Jim Swallow Score 6/10

Heavy Gear Southern Army List One
A sourcebook for *Heavy Gear*
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Serenades: The First Book of Powers

Although it's far from the most well-known or popular of roleplaying systems, Precedence's *Immortal* is still an interesting game, which the company continues to support with a solid line of supplements and sourcebooks. This is the latest, and concerns itself with powers of immortals of all types.

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Billed as the 'definitive guide to the Mystical Powers of Immortal Beings', *Serenades* is split into three sections. The first, Serenade Mechanics, presents fully revised rules for the actual use of these powers in the game. Included are notes on a variety of situations, including multiple targets, resisting powers and so on.

The next two sections deal with the powers themselves. Vogues contains details of powers available to all immortals, ranging from the simple illusions of Allure to the deadly Rapier, which allows an immortal to enchant a weapon with some of his or her essential nature. Secrets, on the other hand, examines the powers of each of the 13 immortal Prides, complete with notes on their views of the world and how this affects their powers.

Serenades contains more than 75 new powers for *Immortal,* with a much clearer system for using them. Along with the excellent presentation, this is a valuable addition to any *Immortal* referee's collection, expanding the options open to players and NPC immortals alike.

Andy Butcher Score 8/10

Cadet Training Handbook

Subtitled 'an introduction to *Star Fleet Battles,*' this is the latest incarnation of the original introductory *SFB* rules set from the mid-eighties, polished and boosted to come in line with the current fourth edition *Star Fleet Battles Captain's Edition.* In the standard 64-page softcover format, the book also includes two pull-out cardstock hex-maps and 80 uncut counters for use in the provided scenarios. The basic idea behind the handbook is to bring neophyte *SFB* players into the complex rules system behind the game through staged scenarios. Each of the 13 provided is preceded by outlines of the rules and tactics it highlights; thus, the player starts with simple movement and firing and graduates to use of power allocation, different weapons, races and so on.

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Along with six pages of forms and charts, the requisite Ship Systems Display (SSD) sheets are provided. Cadet Cruiser and Heavy Cruiser classes are provided for each of *SFB's* major races. The book follows the TFG pattern, lightly illustrated and heavily written. For newcomers to the game the *Cadet Training Handbook* is a good starting point, but it does have a few flaws. Described as being suitable for the ages of 'ten to adult', the writing style wavers between these extremes with no middle ground, so consequently the rules are either hard going or patronising, and as rules-heavy as *SFB* is, a lighter touch might have been a better idea.

Jim Swallow Score 6/10

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We would like to apologise for any inconvenience this might have caused.

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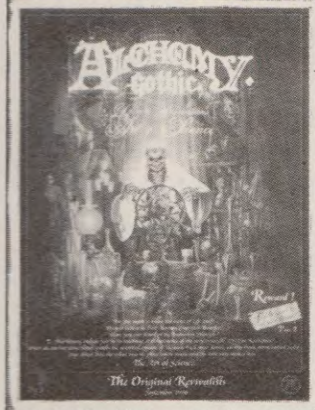

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Alien Ancient Bat'leth

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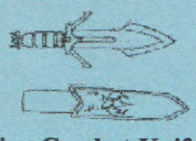
Alien Short Sword



Side blades retract with switch
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Alien Combat Knife

Pulse Rifle
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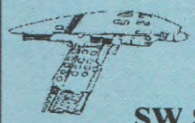

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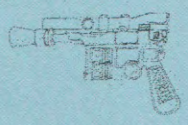

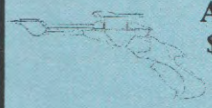

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Classic Horror

IN A NEW SERIES OF FEATURES DESIGNED TO HELP YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL, ADAM TINWORTH LOOKS AT SOME HORROR CLASSICS AND EXAMINES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MERELY SHOCKING YOUR PLAYERS AND REALLY MAKING THEM SCARED.

We all know them – Frankenstein, the lurching monster, product of a mad scientist's dream; Dracula, the fanged bloodsucker who fears the kiss of daylight; and Dr Jekyll, who swallows some foaming liquid, falls to the floor and re-emerges as the hirsute Mr Hyde. What possible use are these characters to a referee faced with a group of players who have been jaded by constant exposure to the innumerable monstrous beasties dreamt up by today's games designers? The answer lies in the novels which introduced them. For most of us, the first encounter with these monsters came in the bastardised form found in films and on television. Here, the shock of their appearance has overtaken the more subtle horror of the original novels.

Take Frankenstein's monster. The plot of *Frankenstein* is one of the most easily plundered, quite an achievement for the first novel of a 19-year-old Mary Shelley. The tale of a creation running wild, out of the hand of its creator, is nowadays at the heart of many stories. The controlling intelligence Skynet in the *Terminator* films is a modern example of a creation turning on its creators. Even Robocop is a form of Frankenstein's monster, albeit a benign one.

Novel inspiration

To keep your players on their toes, however, you're going to need a lot more than a shambling monster – these people kill a mound of them every session, often just for warm up. The inspiration lies in the novel. Frankenstein's monster is an intelligent, cunning foe. He rarely involves himself in face-to-face confrontation with his creator and enemy, despite his greater physical strength and dexterity. Instead, he kills those his creator loves.

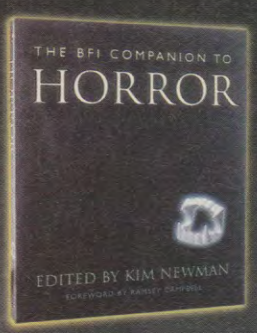
Now, imagine a party's reaction when they see the NPCs they have come to know and trust slowly being killed. Imagine them being unable to confront their enemy at first. Then, imagine their reaction when they realise that the whole chain of events may be their own fault. Even the most experienced group will begin to re-learn the meaning of horror. Terry Gilliam's film *The Fisher King* is worth a look to see how a disc-jockey reacts when confronted with the results of his own creation, a radio call-in nutter who slaughters a bar full of people after a flippant comment from the DJ.

This situation could arise in any number of ways – a being the party has set free by mistake on a previous adventure or perhaps the botched result of a spell. The origin doesn't matter as much as the motivation. Frankenstein's monster was abandoned by his creator and then reviled by all he tried to befriend. Much as we might despise his actions, we can understand them.

The chain of events that leads the persecutor to torment the characters must make sense. This type of villain must be a truly memorable foe, with enough history to make his exposure and defeat a climactic encounter, bound up, as it is, with the party's guilt.

Of course, you can always approach the story the other way, by looking at Dr Frankenstein himself as the villain. After all, it was his actions in creating and abandoning this new creature that led to the murder and destruction of his family and friends. He is not the mad, cackling scientist of so many films but a devoted family man, over-obsessed by his discovery of the secret of life.

You could run a story around the characters' meeting with a genial mage or scientist and trying to prevent the unforeseen consequences of his nearly completed project. After all, the warning the book gives about the excesses of science can hold equally today and well into the future. On the other hand, what would have happened if Frankenstein had tried to destroy the creature as soon as he realised what he'd done? And what if he employed the characters to do it? An encounter with this outcast creature might soon turn the players' sympathies round and then they would face the dual task of integrating it into society, or at least finding it a haven, as well as dealing with the upset doctor.



THE BFI COMPANION TO
HORROR

The images shown here are from *The BFI Companion to Horror* (arcane 15), which is another great source of roleplaying ideas.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde takes this ambiguity about who is evil further. While the portrayal of both Frankenstein and his creator gives us the idea that people are not inherently evil but their actions can be, here the evil within everyone is examined.

This is a bleak novel from an author, Robert Louis Stevenson, who was better known for his children's tales. And let's get one thing straight – Mr Hyde is not an excessively hairy version of Dr Jekyll with prominent teeth. He is described as being a younger, smaller man who looks different from his other side. While he is described as being deformed, no character is able to put their finger on what it is that gives this impression.

"Look into the psychological nature of horror tales for a lesson in how to scare people."

You can easily use the story straight from the book. Whether through the use of magic, technology or flesh-shaping skill and mind control, virtually any system can accommodate the principle. But the chances are your players will have some familiarity with the story, and we don't want them thinking you unadventurous, do we?

Developing characters

So, let's be more crafty. The horror value lies in the evil wrought by the most innocuous of men. Dr Jekyll, famed for his companionable dinner parties, becomes the demonic Mr Hyde, capable of murdering a stranger for no reason. The important thing is the shock value of discovering that two characters are one and the same person.

There's also the seductive nature of evil. The more time Jekyll spends as Hyde the closer Hyde becomes his natural state of being, and soon he needs the potion to transform himself into Jekyll rather than the other way around.

To take the example above, a wizard could find himself becoming increasingly drawn to whoever he's impersonating and so employs the party to seek a cure. But it's more fun to use the temptation of evil. Give a character an excuse for some initial dodgy action and you might find they slip quickly into corruption. A trusted ally may have developed a secret life and end up committing an act which is in opposition to the players' perception of her. But if the ref has sown the right clues, the revelation that the monster is a friend of the characters and not some gratuitous fifth-level orc will make for an interesting climax.

These monsters don't have to be restricted to NPCs. Start throwing players the opportunity to indulge their characters' evil sides and see what happens. Some might slip up and all sorts of possible plots may arise from this. The characters could attempt to cover up what they've done, make amends or even be exiled.

If the player has done it all within character, make sure they reap experience rewards. But remember, in many games there could be a cost in either alignment change or humanity loss, for example, depending on the system used.

What about a character who is portrayed as nothing less than evil? A man who is, by nature, corrupt? If ever there was such a character in fiction, it is Bram Stoker's Dracula. Later generations have grafted all kinds of romantic notions on to old Vlad (not least in Francis Ford Coppola's recent film version where Dracula has an hysterical romance with Winona Ryder) but the original novel has no trace of this – Dracula is pure evil. He usually operates by night but there's none of this 'turning to ash with the first kiss of sunlight' nonsense so common today.

However, it may not be Dracula himself that referees can learn most from, but the structure of the plot. One thing it excels in is showing you how to motivate a disparate group of adventurers – a Texan landowner, two doctors, one English, one Dutch, a young lord and a solicitor and his wife make an odd party indeed. Nevertheless, a web of connection is weaved to keep all these people acting in concert – threats to people they love, a history of friendship and even an inside knowledge of the nature of the vampire are all used to keep the characters involved in the plot. And when this plot requires that they pursue Dracula back to his Transylvanian homeland, a further threat is introduced – the growing vampirism of one of their party.

More than meets the eye

But back to the centrepiece of the book, Count Dracula himself. What can we learn from him that hasn't been done to death before? Well, unlike Frankenstein, or Mr Hyde, Dracula is in the limelight from the very beginning. At first, he appears as an eccentric count with an unusual fascination with England, but it quickly becomes apparent that he is much more than this.

It's difficult now, with the vampire so embedded in popular culture, to realise the effect that *Dracula* would have had on the early reader, who knew little of his powers. The threat of Dracula is so much greater because nobody really knows what his abilities are and how much influence he has. While his evil nature is presaged by the superstitious warnings Harker gets from the country folk on his journey to the castle, Dracula's true nature is only let out in small pieces throughout the story. Indeed, some things about Dracula are never explained. Take heed – blowing your beloved villain's secrets too early in a campaign weakens them immeasurably.

The horror lies not in the abilities but in their effects. The helplessness of Jonathan Harker, trapped alone in Castle Dracula is horrific. The loss of a pure young lady, with whom three of the characters are in love, to the curse of vampirism is horrific. Having to watch your friend or wife go through the same changes is just as bad.

Film horror today is far too often a schlock-fest, with a gruesome baddie murdering various teens in quick succession. It works on shock, not true horror. Roleplaying has a tendency to do the same, but such tactics don't work well for any length of time. If you're prepared to look into the psychological nature of these early horror tales, you will find an object lesson in how to scare people, not just shock them.

FRANKENSTEIN'S GUILT

"Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me – let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!"

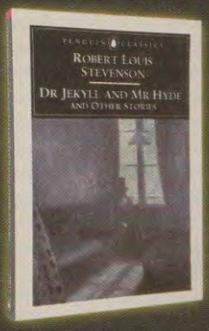
JEKYLL'S DESPAIR

"Half an hour from now, when I shall again and for ever become that hated personality, I know I shall sit shuddering in my chair."

THE CURSE OF DRACULA

"Van Helsing raised his lantern and drew the slide; only by the concentrated light that fell on Lucy's face could we see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe."

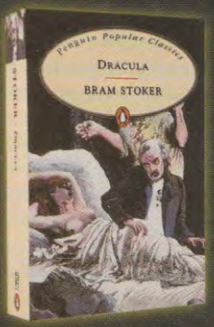
classic roots of horror



Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Robert Louis Stevenson, Penguin Classics, 1979, ISBN 0-14-043117-9

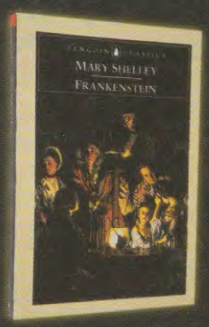
A solicitor is disturbed by the relationship between an unsavoury man calling himself Mr Hyde and his old friend Dr Jekyll. It becomes apparent that the relationship is closer than he imagined. A look into the dark side of the human psyche.



Dracula

Bram Stoker, Penguin Popular Classics, 1994, ISBN 0-14-062063-X

A powerful vampire executes a plan to move to the fresher hunting ground of England, but a band of his victims gather to put an end to this ancient evil. This is a study in villainy and friendship, which is breathtakingly paced and leads to a truly great climax.



frankenstein

Mary Shelley, Penguin Classics, 1992, ISBN 0-14-043362-7

A young scientist discovers the eternal secret and gives life to a creature. Repulsed by its ugliness, he abandons it and returns to his family. The creature is spurned by society and so begins a campaign of revenge against the source of its woes, its creator. A deep and frightening book.

All of these books are available as cheaply as £1 or £2 each. That's a lot less than most sourcebooks.

arcane scribblings

A paper-and-ink anvil on which future magazines are brutally hammered out. Sometimes.

Dear elitists,

I happen to have been trying to get involved in your hobby since I found out about it in the summer of 1981!

So far, absolutely no success! What is it with you people that makes you so narrow-minded and unable to accept anyone outside your little groups?

The first group I met back then were a bunch of pretentious pseudo-hippies who wouldn't let anyone who hadn't been playing for years or who didn't have an exhaustive knowledge of the overrated works of Tolkien join in. Little wonder that the shop they ran became, like most of its kind, a meeting place for all those who played, before eventually vanishing up its own backside due to the fact that nobody was *buying* anything.

Several shops I have been in over the past ten years searching for games have folded due to them treating themselves as elitist clubs. A sort of 'members only – no general public served here' attitude. Do these poncy idiots know anything about business?

Here's a selection of replies I've had at various shops when I have enquired as to whether I could join in any games they ran, or if they knew of any gaming groups I could contact:

"1981? That is a long time." (They then went back to what they were doing.)

"Sorry, but you're not a biker/hippy, Goth/*2000 AD* reader."

"Well, only you know if you want to carry on trying."

And then there are the others, the ones who stand there frothing at the mouth, telling you all about what their beloved 97th level Bard has done over the last three years of game time.

Then there are the dismissive ones, "Oh, but we're all 14th level."

And the dumbest reply yet (from a bunch of *M:TG* players): "No, you can't join in, you haven't got a ponytail."

The most common reaction? Everyone stands in a group, goggle-eyed, giggling like fagots. Very helpful!

Are all your games people like this? Are you all elitists who refuse to let anyone join in your stupid hobby?

How the whole hobby hasn't folded in on itself with this attitude I don't know, but I expect you don't care, because you're on the inside, aren't you? (Games every evening, I expect.)

Every time I see anything to do with games I just feel angry now. More stuff I missed out on. I'm now at the age when most people have written at least one fantasy novel.

If you do print this I expect you'll get a lot of letters going, 'Tee hee! What a sad loser!' It's a typical attitude. If you people are any use you would really be thinking, 'Yikes! We should be helping the poor bloke, before he really turns against us!'

Are these games really worth it anyway? Have I been wanting to be part of what is really just a load of nerdy rubbish for so long?

Mr A Townsend, Hastings

Whoah! Calm down, A. (You don't own a gun, do you? No? Sure? Good.) I can't argue that you didn't meet a number of cliquey gamers – quite obviously you did, and that was certainly unfortunate.

That doesn't mean this is a prevalent attitude. Some gamers are a bit reserved, but most are friendly, and very few are outright hostile.

To get started you need either to get friends interested – just run a game, doesn't matter if you make 'mistakes' – or join an established club. Check the reader ads on page 80; there's one in Eastborne for certain.

Game shops that have a gaming area in them are a great idea. The first Magic *tournament I played in was in a shop (okay Kev, it was Space, Myth & Magic). No, there's no margin in it for the owner, but selling games isn't like selling baked beans, is it? A gaming area helps keep the lifeblood of the hobby pumping around. And ultimately, more people playing means more purchases.*

For what it's worth, I play a game of Call of Cthulhu *once a week (not every night), with players I didn't know at all a year ago. I got to know them through a gaming group where I initially knew no one. Try it. Turn up. Join a game. Or announce that you're running one. You will not always get the reaction you've had so far.*

It's stating the obvious, but the only way to start roleplaying is to do it. Thinking that you'll never ever play a roleplaying game becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

communication

If you'd like to get in touch with **arcane** *there are several ways. The most traditional is to send us a letter clearly marked '***arcane** *scribblings' and addressed to* **arcane**, *30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. The slightly more technically advanced among you can send us a fax on (01225) 732252, while all you fully-fledged InfoCyberOtakuNauts out there can e-mail us at:*

`arcane@futurenet.co.uk` *or visit our Web site at:*

`http://www.futurenet.co.uk/entertainment/arcane.html`.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dear arcane,

I just wanted to point out one popular means of roleplaying on the Net that you seemed to have missed out on in your 'Organising Your Chaos' article (**arcane** 15), and that is Internet Relay Chat (IRC).

I have encountered several roleplaying groups, from *Vampire: The Masquerade* to *BattleTech*, and I myself belong to a *Star Trek* 'simming' group (simming is Systemless Roleplaying), called StarFleet Operations (SFO).

I feel that this medium is at least worthy of mention, because it overcomes some of the problems which seem to afflict more conventional groups, namely getting people together on one day, in one location. I am the Captain of one of the 'ships' in the group, and my crew is from both the UK and the USA, with another member joining in from New Zealand – that's a total of 18 hours, Time Zone wise.

Feel free to drop by our site at: `http://www.freshmilk.demon.co.uk/sfo.html`

Marcus Noon, Cornwall

Believe it or not, we were going to run an article on IRC roleplaying. This Very Issue. We couldn't find a writer in time, so we dropped it. If you, or anyone else, would like a crack at this, let me know.

Dear arcane,

How about sprawling interviews with some of the big names in the field. Gygax, Rein•Hagen, Stafford et al. What games do they play, what do they see the future bringing to the roleplaying hobby. Or maybe you could talk to the Games Workshop people about why they gave up on roleplaying?

A round-table talk with a few of the industry heavyweights would be ideal, what do they think of each other's work.

Soapbox – Jonny Lambert's column was somewhat simplistic. Sure, we should all be a big happy gaming family and not snipe snidely at the lesser beings who do stuff that we don't. But there's got to be a difference between RPGs and other gaming. For a start RPGs are a team effort (hopefully), they require intelligence and creativity, and you can't win. *Trivial Pursuit*, *Monopoly*, CCGs, *Risk* and so on are about winning. Yes, good fun with friends and all that, but they have strict rules and you can win.

Colin R Sinclair, Belfast

Trying to get a load of industry heavyweights around a table might be difficult. Maybe at GenCon? We are running an interview with Steve Jackson next issue, though.

On the subject of games: yes, CCGs etc are different from RPGs, but

Anorexic arcane?

Letter Of The MONTH

Dear arcane,

In **arcane** 16, Steve Darlington asked for short stories in the magazine. You answered that if you do that then something else will get pushed out. Sounded like a good answer until I noticed the page number. It was 78. You could have put quite a long short story in the eight pages which disappeared since the previous issue.

So it comes down to this: in issue 3, Tom Zunder gave you two years. You got to issue 16 (good show), and you keep telling us 'everything is fine, there's no need to worry'. So, where did all those pages go? Where are the good old days (of issues 2 to 4) when **arcane** was 100 pages in size (including covers)?

You can blame the rising cost of paper, threaten us with a higher price, but in the end it comes down to this – are you going to follow in the footsteps of *Amiga Shopper*, cutting down the number of pages until you disappear completely, or will you prove Tom wrong and rise up to give us more pages with larger reviews and, perhaps, even a short story?

Eyal Tyler, via e-mail

Will we shrink like Amiga Shopper? *No. The amiga market is a shrinking one, with a correspondingly small amount of ads. Few ads means few editorial pages. The roleplaying market, though not large, is stable.*

That we're now falling to 84 pages is a reflection of the fact that **arcane** *has had its year or so of grace, and is now expected to make proper money. Short of ad revenue suddenly rising, we need to cut costs a little to do that. Hence the eight-page reduction.*

That's the bad news. The good news is that the re-design in issue 13 increased the word count per page by nearly 50%. This means that there are more words in this issue than there were in those 100-page issues. Yeah, appearances can be deceptive, but count them if you don't believe me. You're getting less paper, but more content.

Other good news is that 84 pages is one of those 'standard' sizes for magazines. I say this with confidence having come from another magazine (about cycling) which also ran at 84 pages. And that's currently on issue 64.

I'm still not going to print short stories, though.

they are loosely part of the same hobby. You know all the arguments.

Our coverage of CCGs is intended not so much for the card players who only *play cards, but for the roleplayers who* also *play card games – which is most of you.*

Dear arcane,

I want to say something about what it's like to be a female roleplayer, but all I can think of is this – next time a woman walks into a roleplaying shop, could the shop assistants of this world please not look at her as if she is mad, lost or maybe looking for a brother or a male friend. No more 'Are you looking for someone?', 'Can I help you?', or 'Have you taken your pills today?' comments from geeky long-haired blokes – and they are always blokes, I don't think they interview girls for the job.

Well, the rantings of a lunatic don't make much of an interesting read so I'll just say that your magazine is the best.

Also, I'm currently looking for a penfriend or two, so if you can print my address, I would be most grateful.

Catherine Hope,
12 Wells Mount,
Upper Cumberworth,
Huddersfield, HD8 8XQ

Okay shop people – get it sorted. Sexism's not big, and it's not clever.

Dear arcane,

G'day, Paul. I don't know whether you'll still be the editor of **arcane** by the time you get this, but you can probably help me anyway. I'm a RPG player/GM in a remote area of Australia, so we have had very little contact with other players or groups at all in the last five years.

What we really want to know is who is still part of the hobby in the 'mother country' and what do they do, and most importantly how old are they? We are in our last year of schooling and are seriously wondering if we are too old for roleplaying, or if we were too old for it three years ago. Please e-mail me by name at the address below.

Andrew 'Dono' Donaldson-Hollis,
Wodonga High School
wod-hs@postoffice.csu.edu.au

Well, I'm 28 and I'm a journalist. Andy's 26. He's a journalist too. Jon's 33 and, yeah, he's a journalist. So that's us in the office.

Andrew Rilstone's in his early 30s, I think. Phil Masters is in his 30s too. Others, I don't really know. We don't ask our writers how old they are.

I do know that the average age of our readers is roughly 20-21. 'Student' is probably the most common vocation. The rest of you are mostly white collar workers of one kind or another. Does that answer your question, Andrew?

Dear arcane,

Andrew Rilstone was spot on in the article he wrote in last month's issue (**arcane** 16). For me it started in 1980, but it was always the feeling of being part of and starring in films such as *Star Wars, Time Bandits, Tron* and *Hawk The Slayer* that I wanted to emulate through my roleplaying games.

'Adult' games such as *World of Darkness, Rolemaster, Pendragon* and so on are fine in their own right, but simply cannot create the same excitement, the thrill of doing something you only dreamed about. Roleplaying games were my own personal Jim'll Fix It. That's why I liked *Toon* and the *AD&D* games which really laid on the weird stuff *(Castle Amber, The Desert of Desolation* series, *Up The Garden Path, Castle Greyhawk* – that kind of thing).

Childishness is really underrated. To me it is inextricably linked with creativity and breaking established rules and regulations. I'm not saying that roleplaying itself is childish, but to me the ideal session is when the players are so absorbed in what's happening to their characters, they dig deep and utilise skills and perspectives that they would never use in real life, taking a fresh, child-like view of the world that they are exploring in the game.

It is an essential facet of innovation and I sometimes worry that self-proclaimed 'grown-up' roleplayers have let themselves forget exactly what it is that drives them to play these games in the first place.

David Van-Cauter, St Albans

You're right, David. Getting absorbed in games is definitely what it's all about. The odd can of beer can help of course. Er, though if you're under 18 this isn't an incitement to hang around outside an off-licence waiting for someone to buy you a big, budget bottle of cider. Oh no. Let's face it: cider's disgusting.

Dear arcane,

Re: 'The Uncanny X-Games', by Antony Jonston, in issue 16.

What about *Hero's Unlimited*, hey? You know, by Palladium games?

The games with all the rules from *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (another one you didn't mention!) and all the fun of *Ninjas and Superspies!*

It uses the Palladium gaming system, which makes it compatible with *Rifts, Palladium RPG, Robotech, Ninjas and Superspies, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and all the other Palladium games and sourcebooks.

How can you get a more versatile superhero roleplaying game? TELL ME!

Soulcatimous Pteppic, via e-mail

You buy Champions? *But seriously, we forgot. We can't cover all of the systems all of the time.*

arcane shorts

Here are some small, but perfectly-formed snippets from the rest of the month's mailbag.

I like your magazine. The encounters are great. The other articles are usually brilliant too, with some exceptions. The main exception is the magic combos. They are, to put it bluntly, crap.

Jam E Snorman, Devon

Let me know what you think of the free book on the front of this issue. If you haven't changed your mind, tell me.

Just a note to say how impressed I am with Puppetland. Excellent material; original, scary and begging to be played.

Well done.

Lawrence Whitaker, e-mail

Glad you liked it.

I am interested in submitting articles on gaming for your magazine. I would be grateful if you could therefore send me a current copy of your writers' guidelines, and any other applicable information.

T Mark Hope, Den Haag

We haven't got any. If you've been published elsewhere, the best approach is to summarise article proposals in about 250 words and send them to me, Dan Joyce, at the editorial address. Include a copy of your published work. If you're unpublished, we need the finished article so we can judge the quality of your writing ability. Things like house style we can worry about at a later date.

To claim, as Tamsyn Hutchinson did in **arcane** 16, that all that male roleplayers want to do is power game is blatantly untrue. Why doesn't everyone just realise that the majority of people are sick and tired of the argument about whether women can roleplay. Of course they can, only a small minority cannot, just like there is a small minority of male gamers who can't. Only an idiot would claim otherwise.

Stephen Anderson, Glasgow

Sure, we don't all power game, but, c'mon, where's the fun in not *carrying around battle axes or bazookas, eh? (Relax. Joke.)*

free reader ads

More weresheep and snotling trouble – but no sign of the pixies, fortunately.

games for sale

● *AD&D* and *Warhammer* rulebooks and modules for sale. Plus figures. London area. Contact Dean after 7pm on 0181 252 3315

● Mint *DMG*, 1979, perfect condition, rare in this condition. Offers? Chris 01268 457135

● *Traveller, Traveller 2300;* original *D&D* (battered), *Eldritch Wizardry, Blackmore, MERP, Trollshaws, Bree Scenarios.* £50 the lot. Ed Griffiths, 6 Collings Walk, Prestwood, Gt Missenden, Bucks. 01494 83616 after 7pm

● A bargain! Yet again. *TWG:2000,* 2nd edition + 11 supplements £28.60. A4 sheets of GW floorplans, good condition £10. Phone Dave for list 01279 452040

● For sale: *Ravenloft, Al Qadim, Birthright.* Also *Changeling, Earthdawn, Star Wars & Kult* starter packs (£25 each) Lots of other stuff. Call John for list 01689 891476, evenings only

● **Bargain of the month**
Bargains galore! *Epic, 40K, Warhammer* and more from £10. Good condition. Contact Paul 01257 260485 after 6pm

● Deluxe *RuneQuest.* Also *Glorantha-Genertela* and *Monster Coliseum.* As new. £30 the lot. Contact James on 01642 570303

● PC/CD-ROM *Warhammer, Shadow of the Horned Rat* (reviewed in **arcane** 2, 8/10) As new! £30. Telephone John 01454 324364

cards for sale

● *ME:TW* – anyone interested in exchanging spare limited/unlimited cards on a one-for-one basis? Phone Ian 01623 512970

● Bargain! Nearly 1,000 Wyvern cards including 200 rare and uncommon. Mint condition, only £45 ono. KR Bawden, 6 Parc-an-Maen, Porthleven, Helston, Cornwall TR13 9AU

● Single *Magic* cards for sale. For list send SAE to Andrew Syme, 12 Duke Street, Blackpool FY1 6MN

● Cards to trade or sell for *V:TES, Jyhad* and all the expansions of such. Contact Michael on 01779 841319

● Only 18 *Xenophile* booster packs left for sale. £2 per pack, including postage and packing. Contact James McArthur, 85 Barnton Place, Glenrothes KY6 2PT – or call me on 01592 758494

● *Mythos* limited edition cards for sale – singles and complete adventures. Send SAE for list to S Clapton, 8 Kesteven Road, Stamford PE9 1SQ

● *Star Wars, ST:TNG, Middle-earth,* many bargains. Contact Phil Pearson, 223 Wykebeck Valley Road, Leeds LS9 6PL

wanted

● *Dragon Dice* singles or *Buck* dicemaster considered, good prices. Also want a PBM *Alaytester.* Write now to Carl Redfern, 121 Regent Street, Church Gresley, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 9PH

● Any *Planescape* products for *AD&D.* Also the original version of *Under a Blood Red Moon.* Contact Roland on 01242 862122

● *Wildstorm* SHI card, will trade OOP *Magic, X-Files,* or will buy. Contact Richard Langsford, 2 Prouse Rise, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 4TD. Or call 01752 843061

● Anything for *Gamma, World Tunnels and Trolls* and *Aftermath.* Please contact Rob on 01527 525847

● Any material that *WFRP* GMs have come up with for *Marienburg.* I am creating a *Marienburg* sourcebook (unofficial and separate from the one Hogshead will shortly be releasing). Any locations or personalities wanted. In return, I will send you a completed copy of the sourcebook, free of charge when it's finished. 01242 862122

contacts

● Novice Peterborough roleplayer (male 16) seeks other players in local area. Fantasy/science fiction. Contact Tom on 01733 270137 or e-mail cpf@telecall.co.uk

● Calling roleplayers in London. Fun-loving player needed for established group, various systems played. Jason 0181 969 2712 after 7pm

● *Exile* – The Dark Nebula web site http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~gothtech/darkneb.htm for *Null Cosm* SF RPG. Contributors wanted

● Stourbridge area. Looking for players to form a new roleplaying group. *AD&D* or *Warhammer.* Everyone welcome. Contact Jon Williams, 4 Chalfont Place, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 9EP, or call 01562 884838

● *Cyberpunk* ref/player (and *Netrunner* CCG) seeks gamers in Brighton area. Call Dave on 01273 551810

● Seeking roleplayer with sense of humour for mature *AD&D* campaigns. Matthew Bond, 30 Victor Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 4JB

● Help! Bored roleplayer in Watford seeks game(s) to join. Please phone Emma on 01923 226578 or e-mail DEWEYE@BRE.co.uk

● Give a guy a hard time. Roleplayers wanted in the Linwood and Paisley area. Contact Dave on 01505 322341, after 6pm please

● Serious and experienced roleplayers wanted for high adventure games in Lichfield area, 21+. Write to Andrew Curtis, 107 Alrewas Road, Kings Bromley, Staffs DE13 7HP

● *Magic* player in Northants wants to trade. Hundreds of cards to swap. Phone Lewis on 01327 879087

● Male Drow of the Masquerade seeks Lillit for late nights, debauchery and intrigue. No Ibuth need apply. Contact Richard Yeates, Flat 3, 168 High Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 1EX, or call 01634 832921

● *AD&D* DM. I've got the space, the time, all I need is the players. S Russell 01227 712882

● London roleplayer/wargammer, 24, seeks group 20+ in the greater London area. Can GM. Call Rick on 0978 849917

● HELP! Players/GMs wanted in Troon/Glasgow area. Must be aged 20+, own transport preferred, though not essential. Group meets on Tuesday (Glasgow) and on Sunday (Troon). Ian 01292 478065

live action

● Woking by night LARP! The 'safest' place to be a vampire. Contact Alan on 01483 773035

● Castleland live roleplay wants brace and monstrous individuals for war in forests of Arundel. Send SSAE to Graham Richards, 13 Gravits Lane, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 5LT

● The HoC invites you to 'Get Stuffed!' at Tatton Park, Cheshire in mid March. A weekend event sanctioned by the Lorien Trust and using the LT rules system. Contact Manthar on 01244 340270 or Brendle on 01244 350817 for more details and a booking form. We will slay you Kris Tay-lor!

Play-By-Mail

● Playtesters wanted for space PBM. Playtesters get discount on full adventure. Free for three turns. Contact Christopher Moss, 52 Deborah Avenue, Fulwood, Preston PR2 9HU

● *Anarchy* Fanzine/PBM. Playtesters needed for free first go PBMs. It's free, what's to lose? Craig Boyes, 6 Hill Top Way, Braithwaite, Keighley, W Yorks BD22 6HP

● *Global Aerial Dominion* (new PBM). Apocalyptic war using military aircraft! Send SSAE to Dave, 9 King's Avenue, Marcham, Abingdon OX13 6QA

● Free! Playtesters wanted for single character FPBM set in the ancient city of Morchael. Please send a SSAE to Daniel Wright, 40a Wood Road, Trefforest, Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan CF37 1RQ

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fanzines

● Article contributions wanted for new wargames/roleplaying fanzine. Any topics. Call Joshua on 01452 740969

● Artwork wanted! Amateur and professional for fantasy magazine: violence, magic, vampires, sci-fi. *Role Your Own*, 61 Lord Nelson Street, Nottingham NG2 4AJ

● *Defiant* – CCG fanzine. *Magic, Star Trek, X-Files* etc. 90p+ SSAE – 65 Jelbert Way, Penzance TR18 3DP, or call on 01736 332800

● Fantasy and science fiction writers/artist required for new magazine. SAE to 12 Shannon Court, 1 Tavistock Road, Croydon CR0 2AL

● New fanzine: *Hex, X-Files, Discworld,* Stephen King ect. Only 60p plus large SAE with 40p stamps attached. Contact Chris Edwards at Trefin, Carmarthan Road, Cross-Hands, Llanelli, Dyfed SA14 6TH

● Free fantasy and science fiction magazine on-line at `http://www.sf-fantasy.com` Includes original artwork gallery, fiction, reviews, conventions and more. Visit us now!

● *Imagonem* – Norwegian gaming fanzine. In glorious Norwegian, of course. Matthijs Holter, Smalgangen 16, N-0188 Oslo, Norway

● *The Jawa Melting Pot* – a *Star Wars* RPG fanzine – needs submissions! John Greenhaigh, 1 Masefield Av, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 3GZ

● 'On The Grey Carpet...' Read the next 4,997 words or so only in *Espylacopa 3*. £1.50. Gorgeous. Wes White, Splott's Moor Farm, Wick, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8JS

● *Tomb 3:* vampire quarterly. Out now, £2.50. *V:TM, V:TES, Sabbat, Kindred, The Embraced, Necrohunter* +. Morien 01452 533629

● *Warpstone* issue 3. The *WFRP* fanzine. £2.50 (£9 for 4 issues). John Foody, 10 Colenso Road, Clapton, London E5

● Available now, new *Traveller* fanzine. Send 50p and SAE to Jon Broster at 23 Riverside, Chelmsford CM2 6LL

messages

● Assest icom tropical: steel hinge reactivation is imminent. Return to cell for personnel update. Prime

● Kayln – Don't think I have forgotten you. Lillian's spirit will be avenged, the purple lady walks again! Marcus, Jessica and you will fall one by one, for I have seen your souls and thus you are forever marked. Matrim

USS Bozeman

● No snotling on USS Bozeman. Is a weresheep teleported aboard to assassinate Bateson. (Manic laughter)

Weresheep? Weresheep? An eerie baa-ing is heard coming up from the hold. 'Baaaa...' Sort of like that, anyway. Only even eerier.

● This is Hellbringer, Bateson! You didn't destroy the entire fleet. Space combat is too honourable for your demise, so a genetically altered proto-snotling was located on board your vessel. This creature is super replicating and ultra-destructive. You have about ten minutes before your ship is torn apart from within. Now my brothers will be avenged. Goodbye forever Bateson

The Bozeman quickly begins to fill with identical proto-snotlings. Multiplying with alarming noise, they eat everything in their paths, starting with the weresheep.

● Bateson to security. Find and kill that snotling now!!!

But with only ten minutes to save the ship, surely this is the end of the USS Bozeman... Wait a minute! What was that eerie belching sound? Great Scott! They're on the bridge!

roleplaying clubs and societies

Tell us about your club – where, when and what you play – and we'll tell the world.

● **Bath Roleplaying Club**, Sundays, 11.30-5pm. No fees. Needs new players (18+).
Neal 01225 463631

● **Battlezone**, Fridays, 5pm, 58 Boutport Street, Barnstaple, Devon.
Pete Ashman 01271 321344

● **Black Country Roleplaying Society**, Thursdays, 7.30pm. Blackheath Coronation Social Club, Park Street, Rowley Regis, West Midlands. All ages and games – 70p a night.
Steve Turner 01384 235244

● Formerly **Bournemouth Beserkers**, Fridays, 7-9pm, 32 Ellingham Avenue, March, Cambs. "Got *Planescape* for Christmas and need keen players."
Chris or Debbie 01354 657713

● **Bradford Games Club**, Sundays, 11.30am-6.30pm, Gingerbread Centre, Darley Street, Bradford Centre. "All Workshop games, some others. £1 for room rent."

● **Bristol LRP Society**. Monthly fantasy LRPs out and indoors, rich gameworld, comprehensive rules. Also *Renewal, Gathering* etc. Meet Friday 8pm at the back room of the Assize Courts pub, Bristol. Old timers and virgins welcome.
Ciaran *0117 974 1863*
Andy *0117 970 6651*
Dave the Hobbit *0117 907 9195*

● **Dragons on the Hill**. Wednesday 6-11pm. (18+) King of Diamonds, Leather Lane, EC1.
Mark Shorey 0181 560 3160

● **East Kilbride Games Club**, "Speak fish man!"
John 01355 260601

● **East Midlands RPGA/Harlequins Games Club**, Sundays, 1.45-6pm. 2nd Arnold (St Mary's) Scout HQ, Atherley House, Calverton Road, Arnold, Nottingham.
Simon Stoppard 0115 921 5533
John Harris 0115 939 4185
`sara@theleys.demon.co.uk`

● **Elemental Lords**, every three weeks, Worcester.
Paul Baker 01905 428386
`d.foxall-reilly@worc.ac.uk`

● **Finchley Games Club**, Thursdays, 6.30-10.30pm. Old Finchleians Sports Club, Woodside Park.
Seren 0181 202 3856

● **Glasgow University Gaming Society**, Thursdays (term time only), 5.30-9pm. Queen Margaret Union, University Gardens.

● **Grimsby Wargamers Club** for all wargames, boardgames and cardgames (no FRPs). 14+ only, Mondays and Thursdays.
Tim Walker 01472 348953

● **Guild of Mêlée and Magic**, Various days, Various venues. First visit free if you take along a copy of **arcane**, annual membership £5.
Central (Mondays RPGs, Tuesdays CCGs) – *Jason 0181 715 8675, The George, 213 Strand WC2*
West (Saturdays – RPGs/CCGs) – *Gerald 0181 991 1297*
East (Thursdays – RPGs/CCGs) – *Mel 0181 595 3467*
South (Sundays – RPGs/CCGs) – *Jon 0181 699 9654*

● **Hobgoblin's Hideout**, Tuesdays 7-11pm, The Queen's Head, Brighton. *Battle Rage.*
Ric 01273 683400
Alan 01273 842742

● **Islington**, weekends. *M:TG*, roleplaying, GW board games.
Simon 0171 226 7724

● **Liverpool WGA**, Thursdays, 5.30-9pm, Sat and Sun 2-7pm, 43 Renshaw Street, Liverpool. "All ages welcome. RPGs also."
Jim 0151 428 1076

● **Manticore Games Club**, Thursday, 7.30pm. Old Bell, Hemel Hempstead. Cards, boardgames, RPGs.
Steve 0181 903 5446

● **Minotaur's Head Roleplay Society**, North London. RPGs, CCGs, wargames, freeform.
Steve 0181 482 5568

● **Pembrokeshire Games Club**, Wednesday, 6-9pm. Community Education Centre, Haverfordwest. *Magic, AD&D, Vampire, Necromunda.*
Adam 01437 762633

● **Redcar Adventurers Roleplaying Games Club**, Friday, 6-9pm. Redcar Library.
John 01287 642523

● **Ring of Mages**, *M:TG* club.
Jamie 01888 544880

● **Roleplayers of Chester**, Wednesdays, 7.30pm-late. Chester Rail Club, Hoole.
Greg 01606 883698
Allison 0151 200 6945

● **Rugby Players' Guild**, Monday, 7.30-11pm. Players and GMs (18+) welcome.
Bill 01788 334165
Keary 01788 334941

● **SASRA RP&WGC**, Thursdays, 7.30pm, Summergrove Hotel, Hensingham. "Wide range of RPGs, LRPs and CCGs."
John 01946 590114
Ray 01946 861204

● **Spartan Circle Club**, Sunday, 6.30-10.30pm. St Laurence's Centre, Northfield, Birmingham.
Paul Rickards 0121 415 4722

● **Stamford Adventure Society**, Monday and Wednesday 8pm-11pm, RAF association, St Pauls Street, Stamford, Lincs. Roleplay and wargames. Players and GMs 16+.

● **Stockport Goblin Horde RP Club**, Wednesdays, 7pm. *AD&D, WFRP, Shadowrun* etc.
Rachel 0161 456 1444

● **The Albion Guard Games Club**, Mondays and Tuesdays. The Plough, Dog's Head Street, Ipswich.
Keith 01473 289560

● **The Orc's Armpit**, Second Wednesday every month. Hobson's Choice, Banbury. *Magic, Trek* CCGs. *Earthdawn, Warhammer* RPGs.

● **Wandsworth RPG**, Mondays, 7.30pm.
57a Heathfield Road, Wandsworth.
Dave 0171 738 1807

● **West London Card Games**, Tuesdays. The Castle, Acton. *Magic, Star Wars* etc.
John 0171 772 1957 (days)
0181 993 4439 (evenings)

● **Windsor RPG Club**, Tuesdays, 7.30-11pm, The Three Elms, Junction of Clarence Road and Hatch Lane, Windsor. Over 18s only. We play anything. Games rotate on 6-8 week cycle.
Andy 01753 573394 (evenings)

● **Worlds Apart Roleplayers**, Tuesdays 6.30-11pm, Wartling Road Hall, Eastbourne.
Geoff 01323 646907

other stuff

● 500+ SF and fantasy paperbacks – offers or W.H.Y.? Will deliver 50 miles round Manchester. Phone Roger on 01706 228209

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● Swaps list – RPGs, boardgames, miniatures and CCGs. Swapping the unwanted *(Magic: TG* and *Heroquest)* for the needed *(Talisman 2nd Ed* + Exps). Paul Scott, 13 Kiln Crescent, Bp Middleham, Ferryhill, Co Durham DL17 9AP

● Figure painting by 'Golden Demon' winner. Excellent service. SAE to Paul Naylor, 27 Diamond Street, York YO3 7LH

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PART THREE
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ARTIST: ANDREW CURRIE
SPREAD OUT! SEARCH THE PALACE! FIND THAT MEDDLING INTETLOPER AND BRING ME HIS HEAD ON A STICK!
AT ONCE, NAZ!
MEANWHILE, WE CAN GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS AT HAND...
I TRUST THE SAFE IS NOT BEYOND YOU, GREEBO?
THOSE GLYPHS OF WARDING COULD BE TRICKY, MY LORD NAZ... I'LL GET TO WORK
MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE THE PALACE WALL...
STEADY NOW, NEDDY...
...LET'S SEE WHAT'S GOING ON 'ERE AT lord DELORIAN'S PALACE!
SOMEONE WAS JUST RINGING THE ALARM BELL...
SEEMS QUIET ENOUGH NOW...
SHUKK!
GET OFF ME YOU PONCY ELF BEGGARS!
ON THE BATTLEMENTS...
GET ORF, I SAID!
WHAKK!
THWUDD!
GREAT GANDALF'S G-STRING! WHAT THE 'ELL'S GOING ON!?
DAI! DAI! DAI! DAI! DAI!

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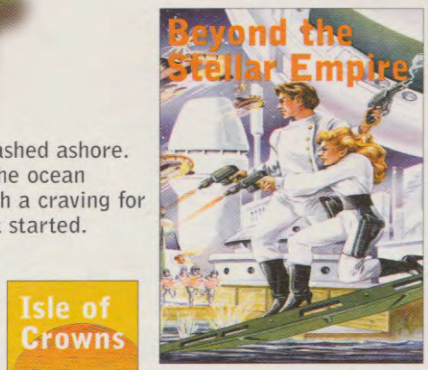

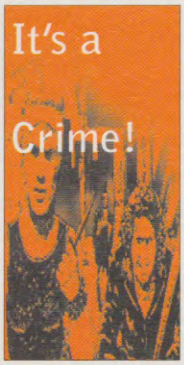

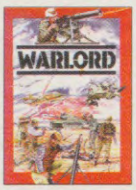

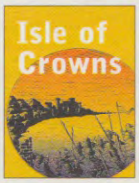

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